J Holgarthick

THE

GARDEN OF FLORENCE;

&c. &c.

THE

GARDEN OF FLORENCE;

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY JOHN HAMILTON.

LONDON:

JOHN WARREN, OLD BOND-STREET.

MDCCCXXI.

(62)

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DEDICATION.

TO ———

1.

THIS book is thine—this record of past hours;
This chronicle of feelings gone for aye!
Thou 'lt find a line or two about the flowers,
And words of welcome to the Lady May:—
Think not with these I now abuse my powers,
I 've learn'd at length to reverence Lady-day.—
These are old follies—as the time increases,
I give up drawling verse for drawing leases.

2.

I will not tell the world that thou hast chid
  My heart for worshipping the idol Muse;
That thy dark eye hath given its gentle lid
  Tears for my wanderings;—I may not choose
When thou dost speak, but do as I am bid,—
  And therefore to the roses and the dews,
Very respectfully I make my bow;—
And turn my back upon the tulips now.

3.

I 'll give my goods up (which thou little dreamest)
  To those who by their fair deserts have won them;
My roses unto Mr. Bell the chemist,
  My dews to Dr. Wells who hath written on them:—
Rather severe in thy decree thou seemest,
  But as poetic objects I 've undone them,
I have but to request the world will view
The lily and myself henceforth as *two!*

4.

There is some talk of fairies in my book,
(Creatures whose bodies have a doubtful title)
I once believed in them—and oft have shook
My boyish heart with thoughts that made me sigh, till
Years stood like shadows in each leafy nook,
To parcel out the wilds in rood and pightle;
There is some talk, I must confess, of fairies,—
I knew no better,—boys will have vagaries.

5.

Thou hast entreated me "to write no more,"
To turn aside from the consuming art;
And can I shun the voice that I adore,
The voice that hath an echo in my heart?
Perchance a gentleman of twenty-four,
And *upwards*, should abandon verse in part,
And keep a house, and plunge in tax vexations,
And die, and leave a will for his relations.

6.

I wish the world could know how young and bright
  Thou art whose voice forbids me poesy;
And how thy cheek, June-born, doth take delight
  In marring thy sweet caution:—oh! to me
Thine eye is lustrous with the Muse's light,
  And that which thou forbiddest is in thee:—
'Tis as the lily in some magic hour
Should speak, and warn the heart against a flower.

7.

But thy advice is law—so farewell, fairies!
  My soul against your glowing haunts I *must* ice,—
Fate, at a word, my course of study varies,
  And brings me books in which a deal of dust is:—
Shakspeare gives place to Blackstone's Commentaries,—
  And Burns's Poems usher in Burns' Justice.—
I give a sigh (a trifle) to times past;—
These are my latest verses, and my last.

And as they *are* my last,—thou wilt not sigh,
  That thus an offering from my heart to thine
I bring them,—as I pledged in hours gone by,
  Craving thee to be kind to them as mine.
Now to the Lady Muse I bid good bye;
  Poor soul! the tears within her eyelids shine:
I kiss her hand, so sonnet sweet, and part:—
Well!—be it so.—A blessing on her heart!

ADVERTISEMENT.

MANY of the poems in this little volume, indeed the greater part of them, have been written for some years, and I very much fear that age has not improved them. Modern poetry is not, perhaps, bettered by being hoarded according to the directions of Horace;—for to be seen in its freshest colours, it should be "worn in its newest gloss."

The stories from Boccacio (The Garden of Florence, and The Ladye of Provence) were to have

been associated with tales from the same source, intended to have been written by a friend;—but illness on his part, and distracting engagements on mine, prevented us from accomplishing our plan at the time; and Death now, to my deep sorrow, has frustrated it for ever!

He, who is gone, was one of the very kindest friends I possessed, and yet he was not kinder perhaps to me, than to others. His intense mind and powerful feeling would, I truly believe, have done the world some service, had his life been spared—but he was of too sensitive a nature—and thus he was destroyed! One story he completed, and that is to me now the most pathetic poem in existence!

The Ladye of Provence is taken from one of Boccacio's stories, and the original incidents are

pretty faithfully followed. The names have been changed, for the reason given in the old epitaph; —*Rossiglione* would not accommodate itself to metre.

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GARDEN OF FLORENCE.

THE

GARDEN OF FLORENCE.

FROM BOCCACCIO.

I.

In the fair city of Florence, there did dwell
A young and sweetly favour'd damosel;—
The daughter of mean parents, yet secure
Of that respect which stainless thoughts ensure.
In quiet home she dwelt, adorning peace;—
She lived by patient carding of the fleece,
And spinning at her distaff cheerfully
From night to morn.—'Twas beautiful to see
Her undejected spirit, as she sat
Singing to nought the work that she was at.

The dark and natural tresses curl'd adown
Upon her easy shoulders, where the gown
Was simply button'd.—And the roses came
Into the summer cheeks of that young dame;—
And on her forehead white, the lilies did the same.

II.

She carded for her livelihood the wool;—
And her so pretty hands were ever full
Of white supplies brought by the Florence youth
Who pined in numbers for her:—Oh! the South
Held, in their eyes, no other so divine!—
Yet not to love did her young heart incline;—
Though she was beautiful, and few of years,
No unhush'd hopes stirr'd strange and pulsing fears,—
Nor thoughts of deepening joy ran riot into tears!

III.

So dwelt the fair Simonida,—so flew
Her hours betwixt the morn and evening dew;

She rose with laughing spirit and light eyes,
Ate of her morning fruit with fragrant sighs,—
Said her young orisons with bowed heart,
And went all singing to her maiden art.
At night upon her pillow as she lay,
She dream'd anew the light dreams of the day,
And brake into fresh thoughts as innocent as they!

IV.

Ah! why should such calm heart and such calm hours
Have Love's destroying hand among their flowers!
Might they not live?—Might not Simonida
Have her sighs spared to sleep, her lips to pray
Their white and morning prayers, her voice to rise
In choral sweetness with the lark i' the skies?
No; she was young—bland—beautiful—and Care
Saw her—and loving one so young—so fair—
Disturb'd her sighs and gave a trouble to her prayer.
Ah pity 'tis that I must tell of wrong,
And harass with rude truth my even song!

V.

Pasquino, a young merchant—fair as young—
Of noble carriage, eloquent of tongue,
And buoyant of his spirit as a child,
Came unto light Simonida—and piled
Her home with fleecy treasures for the wheel.
Oft—oft would she look up—and he would steal
To watch her at the distaff—and admire
Her fingers that till then seem'd ne'er to tire—
Her form of innocent beauty—lightly bent
Over the snowy woof—her eyes intent
Upon her pearl-fair hands, and the curl'd nests
Of hair that love had twined upon her breasts!
And while she talk'd or sung, Pasquino linger'd—
And then the wheel would sleep!—the wool unfinger'd,
Seem'd indolently straying from her hand!—
And silence held their lips in strange command.
He, started into memory—and caught
The quills of yarn her white—white hands had
wrought,

Made theft of what she spun—the simplest piece,—
And went away,—alone,—and kiss'd the fleece.
She—after idle gazings—would return
To her neglected wheel, and gently yearn
Over his cherish'd image, till her eyes
Were wet with tears that fill'd them by surprise,
And from her dreaming heart arose unconscious sighs.

VI.

They met all innocence—and hope—and youth;
And all their words were thoughts—their thoughts,
pure truth:—
Every new day that pass'd, pass'd them the fleeter,
And hours though sweet were chased by hours still
sweeter.
Love had adopted them. The pillow now
Held a perplex'd and aching, dreamless brow—
Ah! sleep alighted not on either's lid—
The fever'd hand toss'd on the coverlid,—

And all the patient dawning of the day,
The dimness—and the gleam—and the chill'd grey
Of the silver East were seen, while they all restless
lay!

VII.

Oh lovers are long watchers of the night!
Watchers of coiling darkness—of the light—
Of the cold window-pane, whereon the moon
Casteth her sallow smile in night's mid noon—
Of the unwearied stars that watch on high,
As though there were lone lovers in the sky!—
Passion lays desolate the fields of sleep,
And wakes a thousand eyes to watch and weep.

VIII.

But to my tale—how sadness creepeth o'er
My lingering measure of this antique lore;—
It cometh onward a slow cloud, and forms
A gloom like that which prophesies of storms!

IX.

Pasquino one autumnal day sat near
The loved Simonida, and with deep fear
Trusted his tremulous passion to her ear:—
She, unaffected, gentle, pallid—shrunk,—
Her heart with its first draught of rapture drunk,—
Scarce daring to give credence to the words
That melted round her like the songs of birds!
She droop'd an instant—gazed—perceived the truth
Bloom'd all at once through her confiding youth—
And all in tears confest her wishes blest—
And hid her face in blushes on his breast!
He press'd her to his heart—her tresses fell
Like shadows o'er his hands—and such the spell
Of this full tenderness—he dared not move,
Lest his breast lose her cheek—lest passion prove
A dream—and he should break the enchantment of
his love!

X.

But soon recovering into converse—they
Pledged o'er and o'er their hearts,—nor saw the day
Swoon o'er the yellow leaves, and from the sky
Through the wan West decay,—till hours gone by,
The father of Simonida came in,
From labouring in the woods where he had been
By day. Pasquino met him. The repast
His daughter brought, and many a sweet smile cast
Upon her lover, as she simply stored
The fruit, and homely viands on the board.
Night hurried on; but ere Pasquino went
From his Simonida—he gently leant
His lip against her pearled ear, and said,—
"My love—to-morrow morn leave thou thy bed,
"And south of Florence meet me where the trees
"Of a most goodly garden fill the breeze
"With odours pleasant, for the olive there
"In fragrant beauty filleth the calm air."

She smiled a promise, press'd his hand, and closed
The door upon her lover,—and reposed!

XI.

The morrow was the Sunday. After prayer
She veil'd her forehead, and adown the stair
Went, by her father's leave, for she had said
The story of her love unvarnished:
First to Saint Gallo, for his pardon pure,
The damsel pass'd; and then, serenely sure,
She met Pasquino, just as the fair sun
His golden sabbath-light had richly spun
Like a fine woof over the mellowing leaves
Of the autumnal trees.—Oh! Love receives
Joy from the breath of morning, its own breath;
The world—the world seems emptied all of death,
And hopes surround its orb one long and laughing
wreath!

XII.

They met—and kiss'd a welcome.—The first morn
On which their lips seem'd for each other born!
She lean'd within his arm, on that new day,
And look'd content to lean her life away!
Their eyes in married lustre could not part,
But, lighted by the radiance of the heart,
Shone on each other:—thus,—they idly cast
Their shadows on the laurels as they pass'd!

XIII.

And sweet the laurel grew—that hallow'd tree,
With leaves that seem the leaves of song to be,—
Which never loseth its appareling,
But looketh constant of the undaunted spring.
And flowers were in that silent garden growing,
Of pleasant odours all and lustrous blowing,
That did enrich the air on which they fed,
And far around a light and fragrance spread.

The lofty foliage lent a tender gloom,
Like that which doth through holy buildings come,—
Where, as adown the shafted aisles you stray,
The very silence seems to feel and pray;—
Such—and so beautiful was that high shade!—
The stretching roses o'er the pathway play'd,
And shook their bright dew at the lovers' feet,
Scattering those morning-pearls their steps to greet,—
And waving as they pass'd as though in reverence meet.
All singing birds, the breaking sun, the theme—
Drew these young hearts along soft wandering in a dream!

XIV.

There were delightful pledges—fair as they
Who met adoring on that dawning day!
Soft voices clothing sweeter words,—and sighs
That brake, when words of tenderness would rise—
And looks of silent passion—and the press
Of married hands in happy tenderness!

The paths were still—save when the small bird threw
His morning notes around, like sprinkled dew,—
And even the bird's light voice but seem'd to wake
A hymn to silence, even for silence' sake!

XV.

Could they not love so ever—ever stray?
Ah, no such thing as time before them lay!
They loved—and were together—and alone,—
The morn, with all its riches, was their own!
They laugh'd—and linger'd,—they sat down—they
wander'd,—
Now spake—and now in gazing silence ponder'd!—
A bed of sage was near them as they walk'd,
(Fit plant to match with that of which they talk'd!)
Pasquino, stooping, pluck'd a leaf, and play'd
With a saying of Old Crones—for dames have said
The sage-leaf whitens teeth—he laughing bit
The idle leaf, loosing his playful wit,
And saying,—" Sweet girl, I taste this leaf, to be
" More wise anon, than thus to worship thee!

"Than thus to kiss thy pensive forehead, where,
"Like beauty's tent, falleth thy parted hair:—
"Doth it not blanch me, love?"—he champ'd the plant—
Amid his heedless talk—and pallid—faint—
He whiten'd at the leaf,—and sigh'd!—His hand
Trembled in cold and fearful damp—A bland,
A dim expression of undying love
Went o'er his shiver'd cheek,—and then he strove
To kiss Simonida—and as he gave
That deathful kiss—that kiss cold as the grave!
He curl'd with shuddering throe and withering clutch,
Like that frail plant which shrinketh at a touch!
One shriek—no more—and lost Simonida
Feels at her feet a corpse—for there it whitening lay!

XVI.

Stern—sternest sorrow ruffles not the mind—
Measureless grief seems bountiful and kind!—

It shakes no nerve—disturbs no tear—but leaves
The heart as calm as that which never grieves.
Simonida look'd down, and almost smiled—
She seem'd in heedlessness a very child:
She moved her lips, but did not speak—yet now
A trembling moisture comes upon her brow,
And in cold horror, with outstretched hands
And livid eye and lip, she sternly stands:
She looks not on the body—knows it not—
The sense of all existence is forgot—
She hath no voice—her open eyes no light—
Her bosom is down sunk—her lips are ghastly white!

XVII.

Yes!—Grief will have its wretch, howe'er it stay
To fascinate at first its dismal prey!
Truth waits to whisper in the desolate ear,
At the heart's pause, all that it would not hear.
The altering corpse of dead Pasquino brake
Her statue-like despair;—and she did make

The olive aisles of that still garden shade
Echo her shrieking voice—shrieking for aid!
The frighten'd hollows of that shade return'd
The shriek of agony,—and far off mourn'd!

XVIII.

Two lovers—happier lovers!—chanced that day
To haunt those walks—and to make holiday
In pastoral recesses and calm air,
Such as to lovers are so matchless fair!
They heard the shriek of woman—and they sped
To where Simonida, by the black dead,
In sobbing passion watch'd the altering frame.—
The gloomed forehead, and the neck the same—
And all death's hiding clouds that o'er youth's morning came!

XIX.

Where is his gallant lip, his falcon eye—
His fair and thoughtful forehead—calm and high!—

His handsome gloomy locks of curled hair,
His warm embrowned cheek—his noble air
And deep melodious voice—so manly sweet!
Is that dark wither'd body at her feet
All the remains of these?—Simonida!
Quit—quit the change!—Oh turn thy troubled eyes
away!

XX.

But now the morning deepen'd—the high trees
Warm'd in the climbing sun—and the quick breeze
Came heralding the golden light along;—
All—all around there was a noise of song!
The crowding Florentines brake hurrying through
The clustering leaves and wreathing paths—and
knew,
And bare the deathlike creature from the place,
Where she lay link'd in terrible embrace!
The black and sightless marks Pasquino bore
Betray'd a poison'd death—They sought no more,

But with wild accusation and harsh breath
Accused the pale girl of her lover's death.
Her ghastly look of silence and cold grief
Strengthen'd the Florentines in their belief:
And by those very laurels, which had worn
Two blended shadows on that sabbath morn,
Her solitary shape return'd, and gave
A shade like something wandering from the grave.

XXI.

The dew was on the leaf, it look'd chill tears,—
Not pearls, as to the lover it appears!
The hanging white rose shudder'd in the air,
As it were sick with grief, and pale with care;—
The birds were painfully alive with song:—
She heard,—and, drown'd in grief, went silently along.

XXII.

She entereth patiently the palace gate,
And stands all tears before the Potestate;—

Her arms are cross'd upon her breast, her hair
Is scatter'd down her shoulders,—and her fair,
Her fair young cheek is colourless and gone,
And her compressed lips seem whiten'd into stone!

XXIII.

And stone she might be deem'd, for slowly she
Harden'd into a youthful Niobe!
In cold forgetful apathy she stands,
With steady fallen hair, and lifeless hands!
Look in her eyes,—no troubled grief have they!
No wild distraction doth her breast betray!
Though one long sigh, at times, doth seem to throw
Out from her innermost heart its stifling woe—
Save this,—a statue standeth she,—while all
Feed their suspicions in the palace hall;—
Suspicions deepen,—and the impatient crowd
From looks to whispers turn,—till clamorous, loud,
All becomes accusation,—and each tongue
Noises for vengeance on Pasquino's wrong!

XXIV.

The Judge, a passionless and aged man,
Look'd mildly on the creature, young and wan,
That stood in unmoved gloom,—as forest pines
When winds are still,—before these Florentines,—
While turbulent thoughts, clothed in tumultuous
breath,
Clamour'd of cruel hate and desperate death.
He heeded not each fierce report,—but turn'd,
And with a voice that seem'd like sound inurn'd,
Commanded silence:—silent were the crowd
Before his tone austere and visage proud!
Potent in length of days and might of mind,
His very look could sway the people-kind!
Then looking on Simonida,—some tears
Ran down his lined cheek, his cheek of years,—
And pity on his awful brow just brake,
As morn first tinges night—and forth he spake.

XXV.

"We must cast rashness by:—this mute young thing
"Claims in her anguish, patient questioning.
"She looketh not of guilt,—and therefore ruth
"Should shield her sorrow, till the utter truth
"Appears by more than seeming circumstance.—
"Come, sad one! Rouse thee from this troubled trance!
"The truth alone I seek,—till that be known
"(And may it still claim pity's gentlest tone!)
"I do vouchsafe thee the respect of all,
"That late have madden'd in this palace hall!
"Now to the Garden of Florence,—there to see
"The dreary truth of what is told to me!"
And silently forth they went—the judge—the maid—
The hushed people—all;—and through the shade
Of that romantic garden the wild throng press'd,
Crushing the flowers of beauty in their nest,

And breaking branches down, until they found
Pasquino's body stretch'd upon the ground!

XXVI.

Back into consciousness Simonida
Started with hideous shriek.—Pasquino lay
Before her as she quitted him:—his face
Turn'd upward,—and his arms, as dropp'd from her
embrace!
She knelt and kiss'd him;—kiss'd his dreadful cheek!
And rising,—with convulsive strength to speak
Strove; but her lips were fix'd with sorrow's weight,—
And she but gazed upon the Potestate!

XXVII.

He look'd on her with pity;—her distress
Savour'd so little of the murderess,—
And then with gentle voice bade her to tell
Faithfully how Pasquino's fate befell.

She shudder'd—but arousing, as from death,
And gasping all convulsedly for breath,
She to the bed of sage,—recounting o'er
Their walks—their conference—and their love before—
Went placidly,—and gathering there a leaf,
Told, in a voice broken by tender grief,
How he had mock'd her fondness with the saying
Of crones and dames prophetic;—and delaying
A moment as in memory,—she applied
The sage-leaf to her teeth, champ'd it, and sigh'd
Over his treasured words of tenderness,
Repeating word for word in her distress,—
And pausing but his name most passionately to bless!

XXVIII.

The impatient people anger'd at the tale
Simonida told. "What! shall this leaf prevail—
" A leaf her only refuge! a poor leaf,
" The source of all this death-work and wild grief!

" The adder hath a poison fang, but here,
" Here is the human adder—ah !—a tear !—
" In pity for thy young deceit weep—sigh,
" Sigh o'er thy serpent-heart's fidelity !
" Let her have eager death !—Let her be turn'd
" Out to the ban-dogs !—or be slowly burn'd
" Here in the Garden of Florence by the side
" Of him who by her bitter hand hath died !"

XXIX.

So raved the anger'd Florentines,—till they
Were awed and silenced by Simonida,—
Whose voice now dallying with her lover's name
In a low childish fondness paused and came !
It weaken'd—and it weaken'd—and it stopp'd—
Her fluttering lips were voiceless—and down dropp'd
Her nerveless hands against her tremulous side—
She shriek'd—and, falling on Pasquino, died.

XXX.

Oh, sweet—unfortunate lovers! ye were young
And scarcely pledged of heart! did ye belong
To a sad or happy fate?—Ah! life's rude wars
Were taken from both,—auspicious were your stars
To end your mortal lives and fervent love
In one day's space! Heaven hath ye both above!
The pine your monument—the grass your bed—
Flowers, and the sweetest, at your feet and head—
The sunlight, soften'd by the tender leaves,
Cast on your married cheeks—the air, that grieves
Through fragrant aisles, your chorister,—to bring
The fairy hymn around you of the spring.—
The rose to weep its cold and early tears
For ever in the youth of after years!
All blessed be your memories and your rest—
Your short and joined fate hath been the best!

XXXI.

In dark amaze, the terror-stricken crowd
Stood—till the Judge spake wondering,—aloud,—
" What meaneth this?—Is this the work of dreams?
" My mind is dazed—Can it be what it seems?
" I speak perchance the idle words of age,
" But venom seemeth in that bed of sage
" To dwell and do death-work!—And yet 'tis said
" The sage is not of an infected bed;—
" But let it be dug up, that it may be
" Burn'd for our Florentines' security!'

XXXII.

The plants were torn out from the hideous bed,
And naked lay the murderer of the dead!—
At the main root, a huge and gloomy toad
Sat in its earth'd and venomous abode,
Dwelling in poison, and infecting there
Each leaf with deadly taste.—None, none might dare

To approach the bright-eyed reptile—but each brought
Branches of scatter'd wood, and o'er him wrought
A funeral pile—the roots of sage were thrown
Into the heap—and all was burned down!

XXXIII.

The lovers side by side were gently laid
In the Garden of Florence,—and the tenderest shade
Of waving trees hallow'd their pleasant tomb,
And wrapp'd it in a green and placid gloom.
The lonely nightingale and watching star
At eve for ever their companions are!

THE

ROMANCE OF YOUTH.

No greater misery can befall you in this life, than to become a prey unto the world.

Sir Walter Raleigh.

SINCE this Poem was begun, many changes have befallen its Author, and of such a nature as utterly to prevent him from at present perfecting his work. The first Canto is however given to the public, as it is complete in itself, so far as fable goes, and contains all that may be called the *dream* of the story. The Canto intended to follow would be one more of realities,—carrying the hero of the poem into the solid misfortunes and betrayals of the world, and mingling him with its actual and painful characters and events. Perhaps it may be said that the stanzas now printed are too visionary and descriptive—too full of repose and repetition; and the Author must endure this charge, since he is rash enough to come thus imperfectly before the

world. If these stanzas be favourably received, it may yet be seen how far he is capable of giving the passion itself of poetry, and not the mere picture of it.

The plan of this poem came suddenly on the Author's mind some few years back, at a time when he was passing his hours in a most romantic part of the country,—and when all his feelings were devoted to poetry. At that time it was to him "a dream and a glory." Since then he has nearly experienced the change which the poem describes. The world of imagination is darkened by the shadow of the world of reality:—and the dazzling colours of fancy have faded by degrees into "the light of common day." It was the Author's intention to have shown how ruthlessly discontent and a connexion with the world mar all the beauty and bloom of youth; how sad and how distracted the heart becomes, when it is distorted

from its innocent rapture and ingenuousness, and impelled from its early romance into the bitterness and severities of ripened life. The bright side of the picture is here only given.

It has been observed by one or two intelligent friends to whom this Canto has been shown, that in its plan it reminded them at first of Beattie's Minstrel. It is thought by the Author, that such a resemblance could but appear on a first and hasty glance, for every sequent part of the story materially differs from that delightful work. He is not conscious of being a plagiarist either in his plot or his poetry; and he had no idea of the Minstrel when he first conceived, and afterwards composed his poem. He has described every thing as well as he could,—the ideal as well as the positive: and he has not paused to consider how others turned their descriptions, while fashioning his own. The reader will find some *aged* words

scattered through the stanzas, which may perchance strike him as an affectation: the Author, however, adopted them only when he considered they simplified and strengthened the poetry: he disclaims all affectation. The old language is full of beauty; and it has been well said by West in one of his letters to Gray, that "Old words are as "good as old gold, when properly chosen." In this Poem there is, it is hoped, no peculiarity of style: the Spenserian measure has been selected because it is the richest and the most capable of variety in the language. If a poet write from his feelings, and trust to them for producing their own expressions, he cannot do amiss. A poet ought to be the farthest from a mannerist. Natural thoughts and feelings will find their fitting language without an effort; and it is to this instinctive style that we are indebted for all that is finest and purest in poetry; in the simple, the austere, the emphatic, the beautiful.

Enough, and perhaps more than enough, has been said in explanation of this fragment, and of the feelings that prompted its publication. The Author must be excused in thus becoming his own *Fadladeen,* but he could not resist an explanation. If this Canto be read,—the conclusion of it may follow: if it be disregarded, "here the story ends." And the Author will have reason to bless the alienation of mind that baffled its completion.

THE

ROMANCE OF YOUTH.

I.

THERE was a youngster boy of golden mind,
Not many years agone; who with his mother
In humble house did sweet seclusion find;
No other relative he had—no brother
To link him with mankind—no friend to smother
Fantasies wild and dim; no sister young
To woo and win, far surer than another,
His nature from its dreams, and with sweet tongue
To scatter silver sounds his listening thoughts among.

II.

His mother was a gentle woman, one
That could not thwart him, she did love him so;
Her hopes did grow like ivy round her son,
And yet his dreaming mind did work her woe;
She deem'd he would be happier, would he know
Less of the essences of things,—and less
Of solitary mysteries that throw
The mind upon itself. And he would press
Her hand, and say he would forsake all loneliness.

III.

But like the certain backward flow of rivers,
His thoughts would course again to their romance;
And as the light upon the water quivers,—
So would his mind upon its wonders dance.
And he would sit for hours listening the prance
Of barbed steed,—watching the steeled knights,
That went in olden days with targe and lance
To succour ladies fair: such dazzling sights
Were unto him enchantment—magic to his nights.

IV.

Oh sunn'd romance! Spirit of Spenser's song!
Spirit of moonlight wolds—of ladies' eyes—
Spirit of high ethereal hearts that long
To beat for ever!—Spirit of golden skies—
And winter cloud, that like a giant lies
Slumbering in heavy gloom the livelong day:—
Spirit of love! Sole light from Paradise
Brought by the wandering Two:—Ah who shall say
Our dreaming boy was wrong, who loved thy proud array?

V.

Some say that from the cradle he was prone
To strange delights, unlike his simple kind;
That he did love to lie and be alone,
To creep from out his bed, when night was blind,
And listen at the window to the wind,
Singing in lofty elms;—to feed his eyes,
Which then were dark, and deep, and full of mind,
With sight of the wan moon in desert skies,
Till tears to those two orbs, like night stars would arise.

VI.

And as he grew, when evening meekly came
With dusk feet to the earth,—he slily took
His supper to the wood, and eat the same .
Beneath some towering pines, that blackly shook
O'er him their raven heads: and he forsook
All thoughts of home in that old forest throng,
Till the air dropt, and the unwearied brook
Told wooing stories as it coil'd along,
Winning him from dark thoughts of mystery and wrong.

•

VII.

The colour of his young years did not fade
With later ones,—but glow'd upon his heart
Even on the edge of manhood,—as the braid
Of light on morning's forehead bears its part
In making evening lovely;—he would start
To hear the murmuring pine, as when a child:—
Oh Nature! ever beautiful thou art
To those on whose young eyes thine own have smiled,
And of their youth, through thee, they never are beguiled.

VIII.

He hung entranced o'er a few wild books
Of elder time, and made them living things;
There was a music in his silent looks,
As left there from his soul's attuned strings;
He gave up all dim walks—wood wanderings,—
And in his chamber sat as he had been
No living boy; but there he framed him wings
To bear him o'er dim flowers and pastoral green,
And float him amid leaves, where Joyance lay serene.

IX.

His mother grieved;—and he had surely pined
At her depression,—but he saw it not,
From his abstraction and romance of mind;
But he did feel as one that wears, I wot,
With an o'erpowering presence; for his lot
Was pain and melancholy;—he did break,
Like one far gone in eld,—his hand grew hot,
And tremulous, and he of nights did wake,
Watching the stars their posts on skyey turrets take.

X.

" And those then are the spirits of olden time,
" Lingering about those regions blue and far;
" The very thought doth shed feelings sublime
" Over my mind like light. That placid star
" Is Venus sitting in her pearly car;
" How full of simple joy is her soft look!
" How full of love! No wild air seems to mar
" Her quiet locks—but all around are shook—
" As hers appear when seen in some unresting brook."

XI.

But illness lodged itself within his frame,
And made a leaden thing of his wild eye;
It hung upon him like the thirst of fame,
But work'd within him deeper injury;
His cheek grew hollow, and his press'd lips dry,
And o'er his limbs crept slothful lassitude;
He look'd as one that must sink down and die,
For by the day he lay in languid mood,
And night was scarcely more filled up with solitude.

XII.

Certes, it was right sorrowful to see
So very gentle and inspired a child
Wearing away as so it seem'd to be,
And going to his grave serene and mild:
The warrior's heart, that is so fiery wild,
Breaks—and a flood of glory streams around;—
But where youth in its quiet is beguiled
To the chill tomb—it doth the gazer wound;
For there no beauty is—no breath—no sight—no sound!

XIII.

At night he felt a longing to be thrown
Into some forest dun, where trees were thick,
And water very cool: to make a throne
Of some quaint bank, and in a pleasant trick
Of idleness, a corönal to pick
Of lilies of the water for his head,—
And ever while his pulse was beating quick
With pain, he sweet things of the summer said,
And framed this little song, upon his midnight bed.

SONG.

1.

O melon-scented lily!
  O water queen of flowers!
When shall I see the silver waves,
Dancing around thee, like sweet slaves
  To Beauty in its bowers;
When shall I take an earthly part
In honouring thy golden heart?

2.

O pretty rose autumnal!
  O fairy queen of trees!
When may I trace thy gentle buds
Adorned with their emerald studs,
  In their green palaces:
When see thy vernal velvet fall
Under thy ruby coronal?

3.

The sound of forest music,
  The water song of streams,
Are become dim and strange to me,
As musings of old witchery;—
  But in my fitful dreams,
And in my waking weary hours,
Spirits come to me, as from flowers.

XIV.

Oh passion! why art thou such madness? Why
Dost thou so fatally thy progress speak?—
Thou puttest out the light of a starry eye,—
And feedest on the beauty of the cheek;—
Beneath thy ravages the heart is weak,
Yet woos thee and thy ruin with delight,
Loving its still destroyer,—like a meek
And quiet Indian woman, that in bright
And clinging flames, to Love resigns her gentle spright.

XV.

It was a pity, so it was, that one
So framed to dwell in golden Arcady,
Should be left naked in a world so lone,
When all trace of those days hath ceased to be,
Save in some rich old page of poesy;
He should have lived in elder days, and slept
With light luxurious creatures near a tree,
Or by the side of some warm stream, that crept
Through vales where never soul repined—or plain'd—
or wept.

XVI.

His health at length revived with warmer days,
And in the quiet sun his eye regain'd
Its mystic lustre, like the wave that plays,
After a storm, with golden glory stain'd.
Near to the open'd window he remain'd,
And read light stories of delightful times;
But when the day in laughing beauty waned,
He closed his book, and turn'd him from the rhymes,
To muse o'er fables old, and call up classic climes.

XVII.

He read of story strange and fiction fair,
Of heathen deities, and shapes divine;
Of girls with heaven-blue eyes and golden hair,
That over glassy waters lean'd to twine
Their tresses with the breathing jessamine;
Of nymphs that mused, as though to marble turn'd,
Or upon green banks sweetly did recline,
When the sun westward through the foliage burn'd,
Waiting till Dian bright from the wood chase return'd.

XVIII.

And when her crescent through the branches play'd,
Sending a silver light, through the red glow
Of the setting sun, the nymphs from the green shade
Came all attendant; from her form of snow
They wreathed her ruffled locks,—and took her bow,
Which had so oft the air with arrows laced,—
And laid it in the leaves; and bending low,
With pearl'd and delicate fingers, quick unbraced
The sandals which the feet of that wood goddess graced.

XIX.

He mused o'er Psyche too, the immortal maid,
Whom young Love woo'd and wafted to the skies,
She that so meek o'er the starr'd pavement stray'd
Of Jove's etherial temple; and that lies
Asleep with Cupid's lips upon her eyes,
Breathing all lovely visions o'er her sight:
She that stood gentle before Jove;—the prize
Of youthful Love—while Ganymede the bright
Stood cloying the eagle's plumage with his hand of light.

XX.

He read and dreamt of young Endymion,
Till his romantic fancy drank its fill;
He saw that lovely shepherd sitting alone,
Watching his white flocks upon Ida's hill;
The Moon adored him,—and when all was still,
And stars were wakeful—she would earthward stray,
And linger with her shepherd love, until
The hoofs of the steeds that bear the car of day,
Struck silver light in the east,—and then she waned away!

XXI.

But these remembrances of heathen days
Fall on the riven heart and wearied brain
Like shadows of dim madness; the mind strays
Backward and backward for ideal gain,
Into the heathen world,—and not in vain,—
For beings rise and crowd to it, and give,
Like creatures of the clay, a heavy pain,—
Nor will they cease, at word or wish, to live—
But still they crowd and wear,—how well soe'er we strive.

XXII.

Soon as the boy could quit his weary room,
And bear him from the threshold to the air,
He did divert him from the sorry gloom,
With sight of much that sylvan was, and fair:—
The patient passion of a snowy pair
Of doves in an old wood,—the leaves, that seem
Disporting like green Eden-birds, where'er
The trees are light,—the linnet's joyous theme,
Sweet as a fit of sound from Music in her dream.

XXIII.

He loved no earthly lady; for as yet
He had not watched for beauty in the forms
Of his own kind: no eye of melting jet
Sway'd the wild heavings of his heart, the storms
Of rolling passion,—as the soft moon forms
And checks the sea-foam and the throbbing wave;
But certes 'tis that wayward boyhood warms
In beauty's light at some strange hour:—the brave,
The cold, the stern, the wild,—can woman's eye enslave.

XXIV.

Oh! who hath ever at his heart withstood
The deep still sweetness of a soft brown eye,
That seems in its own silent orb to brood
O'er visions of the inward mind, to lie
Circled with intellectual witchery;—
And then the even forehead, all above,
As white and smooth as sheening ivory,—
On which rich tresses of the brown hair move;—
Ah who hath gazed on these, nor given a sigh to love!

XXV.

Long raven hair, lying on ivory shoulders,
And eyes with soft and dusky lashes shaded,
And snow-fair breast and brow, awe young beholders
Into still madness:—and one black tress braided
Along the silent forehead, hath invaded
Many a heart, and never pass'd away:—
A cheek, in which the inconstant rose hath faded,
Hath with pale beauty made enchanted prey
Of those who have been wild and heedless in their day.

XXVI.

Calm forest evenings are divine delights,
To such as have been long in chamber pent
With clinging pain and unreposing nights,
And thoughts that lean towards madness for a vent:
The mind amid dim trees becomes unbent,
And the heart draws in store of quiet breath,
A silence melts, as from the firmament,
To temper stirring scenes and things beneath,
And blend the light of life with all the calm of death.

XXVII.

The forest found him every evening lending
His presence to its shades of happiness;
There was he lonely, lingering, dreaming, wending,—
As though he were some form of airiness,
That came those solitary scenes to bless;
To various glens, and nooks, and brakes he wander'd,
And he was very happy, as I guess;
For o'er his book in open air he ponder'd,
Or mused where one sweet stream through hidden ways meander'd.

XXVIII.

Beside this viewless stream, all lonely weeping,
The delicate willow hung. Its silver stem
The birch sent up, like glossy serpent creeping
Out through the lofty foliage,—many a gem,
As dropp'd from heedless Flora's diadem,
Lay round the crooked roots. The ash was there
Strewing its tresses light—and near to them
The pine shook out its dark and dreary hair,
Under which all was wither'd, worn, and wild, and bare.

XXIX.

Yet ever underneath the crowning leaves,
The water lapsed along, as 'twere enjoying
To be alone on soft and silent eves,
The listening solitude with lull'd notes cloying:
It won the lone boy's ear, all gently buoying
His heart up in the silence as on wings;—
All that was rude, and restless, and annoying,
Seem'd charm'd away, as when some spirit sings
On starlight nights to soothe young poets' wanderings.

XXX.

Within the very middle of that wood,
A little lake on grassy banks did lean
Its joyous waves of silver;—and a brood
Of water lilies all around were seen,
Sitting in fragrance on their broad leaves green;
Flowers of the fairest on the margin grew,
And rose-trees, with young lilac trees between,
Circled the still lake buddingly, and threw
A floating foliage there, that took a soften'd hue.

XXXI.

And there two swans did lay their bosoms white
Amongst the lilies,—or serenely go,
Breasting the water into wreaths of light,
Which spread around like halos, and below,
Their well mock'd images did softly glow
Like melted marble:—or they stilly furl'd
In idlesse fair their wings of woven snow,
Or on their backs their necks gracefully curl'd,
And there like spirits sat upon their silvery world.

XXXII.

The 'fisher sets its little breast afloat,
Dying the wave it touches sweetly blue;—
It doth resemble an Italian boat,
Launch'd on the water by some lover true,
And all deserted by an idle crew;—
It loves to creep among the reeds, and show
Between those restless bars the azure hue
Of its rich plume,—and on the wave below,
As tribute from its breast, a feather blue to throw.

XXXIII.

The fish that to and fro were glancing there,
Did mock the mind with fancies; they would seem
Like shooting lights piercing the moonlight air,—
Or like swift spirits seen in some frail dream;
Or youthful poets, viewing them, might deem
They were quick thoughts,—or that young fairies sent
Their silver arrows lightly through the stream;—
And whilst above the water flowers they leant,
They gleam'd like distant stars in the dim firmament.

XXXIV.

The gay fly hover'd o'er the water clear,
And seem'd in its rich shade a pride to take;
The lilies of the valley growing near,
Look'd at their sister lilies of the lake,
And meekly droop'd; the deer that came to slake
Its thirst at that fair water,—with a start,
Leap'd from the shadow which his form did make,
And, through the lilac branches, breaking apart,
Went like the wind in all its wantonness of heart.

XXXV.

Up sprung the goldfinch from the covering grass,
And wing'd its way into the nearest bower;
And there it sat twinkling within the mass
Of playful leaves, where the blithe roses cower
Like fairy birds,—itself a feather'd flower,—
A winged blossom sparkling in the shade:
The shadows fell upon it in a shower,
Gentle green shadows by the foliage made,
Which o'er its plumage rich, like dappled sunlight,
play'd.

XXXVI.

He sometimes heard the sound of distant flute,
Breath'd by some happy, homeward wending wight;
Its mellow music did his spirit suit,
And seem'd fit prelude to a summer night.
He stretch'd along his boyish figure light,
And in romantic idlesse, took each tone
Into his heart of hearts,—his eyes waxed bright,
And imaged music; when the flute had flown,
He heard its echoes die across the forest lone.

XXXVII.

As thus he lay his listless form along,
Amid the pleasaunce of a bed of grass,
He nursed his nature with the hollow song
Of the gloss'd blackbird, who in one rich mass
Heaved out his soul of song. Then would he class
The lays of lesser birds, shed from the spray
That o'er him grew. And as the bee would pass,
Humming its music on its airy way,
He watch'd its little wings spin in the evening ray.

XXXVIII.

And could there then be aught of wonderment,
That our enthusiast should be aye delaying
In this enchanted spot?—a vernal tent
Was ever o'er him, and his heart was straying
In endless journeys of green joyaunce, laying
Its little plans of fairy life to come;
And all his light and rising thoughts arraying
In fair romance. The evening's latest gloom
Came down ere he would bend his wayward footsteps
home.

XXXIX.

Why should the world lay iron chains upon
A youngster boy of such a golden mind?
Are there not men enough with hearts of stone,
And eyes to nature's emerald beauties blind,
To work the tasks and evils of their kind?
Oh! let the etherial dreamer wander free,
As over meadows goeth the light wind,
To nooks which shadows are of Arcady,
And dells which are as deep and sweet as dells may be!

XL.

One eve, the sun was down the west sky sinking,
And hyeing like a bridegroom to his bed;
The deer was at the lake, timidly drinking,
Before he couch'd him for the night—his head
And branching horns with setting rays bright red;—
Full late the gnats did weave their dance, I ween,
And the stern dragon-fly as swiftly sped,
As arrow from the bow;—our boy did lean
Near to the lake, entranced at such an evening scene.

XLI.

A fairy book was idly in his fingers
Half open,—he had read its wonders well—
Of azure birds that are enchanted singers,
And dancing water from a guarded well;
Of shepherd princess, and what her befel;
And of her lover from the eagle's nest;
Of many marvels which I may not tell,
If in my bed I ever hope to rest,
Though why, I cannot guess; but fairies know the best.

XLII.

But tales of faëry are splendid things,
When gather'd in our childhood; they remain
Like dew eterne in our rememberings,
Freshening the mead of memory from the pain
Of wither'd thought; a deep romantic strain
Of music are they sounding through our days;
Who can forget the White Cat, and her train
Of magic hands? The Royal Ram? The ways
Finetta went on th' Ogre's dazzling house to gaze?

XLIII.

And Princess Fairstar is a silver name,
From whose long hair the combed emeralds fell;
And Beauty, who in luckless hour became
The bride of dreary Bear:—but how I dwell
With gossip fondness upon fairy spell!
Where is the boy? Still lying near the lake,
But o'er his ears there steals a honey swell
Of music, as though spirits were awake,
And he with thrilling joy doth start, and list, and quake.

XLIV.

He quaked indeed,—he listen'd long,—he started,
A ray of light shot upward from the core
Of the water lilies,—and they spread, and parted,
And then the light increased more and more;
And fainting sounds of sweetness kiss'd the shore,
And swoon'd upon the water. All afloat
And restless were those flowers with their bright store
Of fairies,—for at every mellow note,
A small and dazzling form stood in each silvery boat.

XLV.

Much doth it wonder me that I can keep,—
I who do weave this mystic history,—
My constancy and ardency from sleep;
So high the state of elfin pageantry!
And I should surely stagger droopingly
Under the magic beauty,—but I place
A steady trust in what did flit to me
In fitful visions of the fairy race,
When I was young, and smiles inhabited my face.

XLVI.

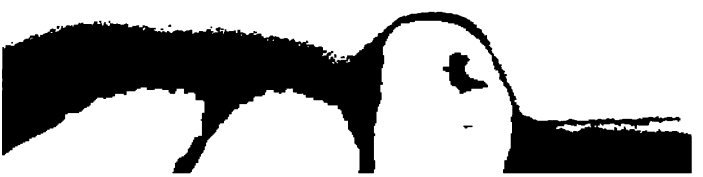
Since childhood (and not yet hath past my youth),
Trouble hath haunted me in many a form;
In my first trial on this world uncouth,
And in my springing feelings, early warm;
And home-affliction fell, that direst storm
That breaks upon us; and my health gave way,
As whispering in mine ear, "the worm—the worm;"
But one gold heart chased all the gloom away,
And rose, an earthly sun, upon my bettering day.

XLVII.

Partly a love of fame—partly the love
Of poesy for its dear self—but more
To gladden one soft spirit—do I move
Along this curious path of fairy love:
If my Muse be upon Oblivion's shore,
And, after all her flower sweet pastime ends,
She must be gulph'd in the drear sea,—her store
Toss'd on Lethean waves,—my nature bends,
And takes the desolate fate the world so coldly sends.

XLVIII.

Ah! can such careless lay as this endow
My life with lustre,—giving up my name
Within the portal, like a flower to blow,
Decking the eternal temple of old Fame?
My song is lowly, and good sooth I shame
To offer it, where many are so fair:—
But yet Simplicity, though aye the same,
May not in every heart so badly fare,
And certes higher bards my little lay may spare.



XLIX.

But why do I delay?—Ah, why indeed
"Dally with faint surmise,"—when I should haste
To quaint delights which I might win, and lead
In silver links of poesy: I waste
My time in idle prattlement, and taste
Every strange cup that is held up to me:—
Now be my soul unto its purpose braced,
Not wandering every where, as chance may be,
But lingering with my small and lily company.

L.

The waves did melt and part before those flowers,
Which bent them like the gentlest boats to land;
And as scared roseleaves flit from summer bowers,
These small and pretty spirits, each with wand
Of crystal brightness in its pearly hand,
Pass'd to the grassy quiet of the shore;
The verdure silver'd underneath that band
Of fays, in spots of softest lustre, more
Starlight and sweet than aught in palaces of yore!

LI.

Amid that airy elfin company,
There were the prettiest shapes that e'er were seen;
Spanlong and very sightly to the ee,
And young as one night's dewdrops are, I ween;
And they as light upon the grass did lean,
Listening to lone sounds waken'd in the air
From lutes etherial!—more emerald green
The grass became, rejoicing calmly there
In creatures of romance, so radiantly fair.

LII.

The freckled cowslip sprang, but meekly droop'd
In those most tremulous starry presences:
Wreaths of the odorous eglantine were loop'd
From spray to spray of all the youthful trees:
Blossoms as white as foam of coursing seas
Studded the grass and leaves;—and all about
The gold and purple breast of the heart's-ease
Did offer resting spots to that quaint rout,—
And rosebuds in the air for a fairy's kiss did pout.

LIII.

Out peep'd the snowdrop, though 'twas summer time;
How could it from such revels be away?—
Although it was oppress'd with the warm clime,
Still it look'd beautiful in its array,
And lonely as the budding star of day!—
All these bright flowers were one night's ornament,
Born in the fairies' breath, to pass away
Even with their vanishings,—by Flora lent
To make for sportive fays the deckings of their tent.

LIV.

Th' enthusiast gaz'd, like one bewildered
And breathless with immortal visitings,—
He sat in chill delight; nor stirr'd his head,
Lest all should pass away like shadowy things;
Now would his eye be dazed with the wings
Of spangled fay, hovering o'er blossom white;—
And now he listen'd to lone thrilling strings
Of magic lutes—and saw the harebell, bright
In its blue veins, for there nestled a form of light.

LV.

One blew a honeysuckle trumpet well,
And made young martial music, till it laugh'd—
And in its mirth flew sparks unmatchable
Of light around; another, with sweet craft,
Stole from some careless fay its cup, and quaff'd
The dew-wine to its depth,—then amid weeds
Hid the small crystal goblet:—oft a shaft,
Made of the film taken from water-reeds,
Did flit across the air, and pierce the lilac's beads.

LVI.

Under the shadow of a May sweet blossom,
Two placid elves, like linked sisters, chased
The moments with the heaving of the bosom
In happy sleep: their arms were interlaced,
And their bright cheeks commingling seem'd to taste
Each other's rosy beauty: overhead
A bee, that had been trammel'd in his haste
That magic eve, a lulling murmur bred;
And dewy leaves a hymn to sylvan quiet shed.

LVII.

A wand was waved through the charmed air,
And up there rose a very costly throng
Of ivory tables, stored with dainties rare,
At sight of which e'en dieted men might long:
They rose amid strange minstrelsy and song,—
And there was pheasant from enchanted wood,
And swan from fairy stream,—and these among,
Were chalices of Eastern dew-wine, brew'd
By pearly hands in far Arabian solitude.

LVIII.

And golden berries, steep'd in cream, were soon
Brought there from stores in Asian palaces;
And from the lonely Mountains of the Moon,
From which swarth Afric's serpent-river frees
Its wily head,—fish, stranger than the seas
Hold in their deep green wastes, to the bright feast
Were brought in coral dishes by streak'd bees;
And fruit, the very loveliest and the least,
Came from young spangled trees in gardens of the East.

LIX.

There was good store of sweet and sheening cherries,
Gather'd from trees that under water grew
In mystic orchards,—and the best wood-berries
That blush in scarlet ripeness through the dew,—
And tiny plums, round, and of blooming blue,—
And golden apples of a fairy size,—
And glossy nuts, the which brown squirrels drew,
Eying them longingly with sly dark eyes,
And stealing when they could a little hazel prize.

LX.

The glowworms waited on the fairies' mirth,
And when the stars of heaven were all asleep
They lamp'd the grassy chambers of the earth,
And in an emerald light the air did steep:—
Such tears perchance the happy angels weep
Radiant with joy.—They gave the quiet green
A richness, as though wonders from the deep
Were cull'd and cast there in unsullied sheen,
To glitter for a night, and never more be seen!

LXI.

The boy's dark eyes were drunken with th' excess
Of wonder, and of beauty, and of joy;
His hands each other closely did caress,—
Within his lips, his sighs were strangely coy,
And could not venture forth;—the heart's annoy
Was its own haunting pleasure:—who would not
Have been on such a night that dreaming boy,
Though madness from that hour should be his lot,
Madness of heart and brain, in dungeon dim and hot?

LXII.

Ecstasy is a honey-kind of madness—
A sweet delirium of th' entranced brain;—
It is a beautiful bewilder'd gladness,
That hath a heightening portion of faint pain,
Born of the heart's intenseness. They who drain
Apollo's golden fruit of sunny wine,
Are sure of it, as is the hoary main
Of its old rage in storms:—the crystalline
Enchantments which he saw, made the boy nigh divine.

LXIII.

The evening's roses in the sky departed,
And their fall'n leaves lay scatter'd in the West;
The clustering fays, so light and merry-hearted,
All tow'rds the water's snowy margent press'd;
The swans came gliding from their reeded nest,
And bow'd their serpent necks before the throng;—
Suddenly fairy voices broke the rest
Of the charm'd air,—and sent, the waves along,
To their advancing queen a welcome and a song!

FAIRY SONG.

1.

See, see! the evening dies,—
See, see! the stars arise,—
Sweetly do they wake and cluster,
Shaking from their hair a lustre:
Are they fairer than our eyes?
Or happier in their paradise,
Than we, who drink the dew, and kiss
Every pretty flower that is?

2.

Stars!—they sleep in azure hall,
And palaces etherial;
We in lily cups repose,
Or in the leaflet of a rose:
They perpetual brightness hold,
We, like them, can ne'er grow old.
Are they merrier than ourselves?—
Elves are stars, and stars are elves.

3.

In water's coral paths we wander,
And tease gold-fish, as they meander
Through their quiet element;
And sleep at night in wavy tent:—
They in a cerulean sea
Bathe in silent liberty;
Or haunt the strange and milky river,
That through wide Heaven doth stray and
quiver.

4.

Hark! the Dragon fly—our Queen
In her boddice, dimly seen,—
In her robe of gossamer,—
In her beauty,—brings with her
A crowning presence for our night:—
So with dress of silver light,
And motion that no silence mars,
The Moon glides in among the stars.

LXIV.

Across the sleeping water's charmed levels
The hailed Queen came in a curved shell,
Drawn by two tiny swans to those quaint revels,
Swans that were whiter than the snowdrop's bell,—
And small as wrens: their lifted wings did well
Mantle their wreathing necks:—at first they seem'd
To be reflections, wrought by fairy spell,
Of those two birds that all the summer dream'd
Over the sylvan waves in which their bosoms gleam'd.

LXV.

And very beautiful was that young queen,
Even to the eyes that were with beauty cloy'd;
Within her shell-car did she sit serene,
Lightly across that happy water buoy'd;
The very air her countenance enjoy'd,
Kissing its sister roses. On her brow,
The fair and fairy ringlets gently toy'd,
And all around that brow did violets grow,
Or so in sooth they seem'd, so freshly did they blow.

LXVI.

Her boddice was a pretty sight to see;
Ye who would know its colour,—be a thief
Of the rose's muffled bud from off the tree,
And for your knowledge, strip it leaf by leaf,
Spite of your own remorse or Flora's grief,
Till ye have come unto its heart's pale hue,
The last, last leaf, which is the queen—the chief,
Of beautiful dim blooms:—ye shall not rue,
At sight of that sweet leaf, the mischief which ye do.

LXVII.

She glided to the earth from her small car,
As though she were of air, or e'en more light;—
That swan-drawn shell did vanish like a star,
That falleth from the steady heavens at night:—
Ah! fairy queen, why is thy form so bright?
Why are thine eyes so fair? Can mortal be
Safe in his regular pulse to have the sight
Of beauty so divine? Ah! quickly flee,—
Or less etherial seem,—or others make like thee.

LXVIII.

The mortal heart that at those revels beat,
Beat quicker at that fairy loveliness,
Which shone on such small cheek so passing sweet,
And look'd perfection in each coiling tress:
He sigh'd within him,—half in gloominess,
Feeling the fetters of his mortal state,
Which chain'd him to the earth; his earthy dress
He fain would have thrown off, for such stern weight
Was iron on his soul:—he could not change his fate—

LXIX.

Or he had been a creature of the air,—
A haunter of the cowslips,—and the caves
Of blue and breath-sweet flowers,—a lingerer where
That fairy spirit linger'd; in the waves,
If she were in them, making golden slaves
Of beauty-tinged fish,—or from the herd
Of lilies taking the whitest one that laves
Its snow-leaves, for a car;—and when grass stirr'd,
Hunting and yoking well the spotted lady-bird.

LXX.

But he was of the earth, on which he lay,
And must his lot, however hard, abide;
Breath was awarded him, and he must stay
The time of its departure:—but he sigh'd,
With unsure wistfulness and baffled pride,
At what he was, and what he might have been!
Still joy again came o'er him, when he eyed
The beauty and the motion of that queen,—
For she advanc'd with step the lightest ever seen.

LXXI.

We are eternal piners after change;
Ah, woe is me! we never are content:—
There's earthly joy for earthly hearts;—and strange
It is, that we are with dejection pent
In our own wishes.—Beauty ne'er was sent
To make us wretched,—and yet wise men say,
This life is all of pain,—that we are bent
With misery, as with old age, for aye;
But we our own dark sorrows make, ah, well a day!

LXXII.

The Fay-queen stood before the mortal youth,
With smiles of dangerous and deep tenderness;
Yet in her eyes there something was of ruth,
A sweet embalming of the boy's distress:—
She meekly smil'd, and then she did address
With birdlike voice his young enchanted ear;—
Such magic tones faintly our senses bless
About the mellow May-time of the year,
When happy hearts, like trees, all blossoming appear.

LXXIII.

" Enchanted boy! Thy mind hath won for thee
" Sights all unearthly and most beautiful.
" No mortal eye on forms of faëry
" Hath ever glanc'd before:—the spirit dull
" Ne'er dreams of us;—but thou shalt never cull
" A cowslip, but a fairy shall be there;
" Let what thou see'st to-night thy nature lull
" Into contentment,—come at eve, and share
" Th' enjoyments of my elves which are for ever fair."

LXXIV.

" Seek not the world. The magic of thy mind
" Was wrought in innocence, and will be lost
" In that pernicious storehouse of mankind,
" Where hearts, in calms, are broken, aye—or tost
" Unfriended in the storms. Be it thy boast
" To live but simply happy:—light and joy
" And youth are thine with us,—but at thy cost
" Close with the poisonous world; it will destroy
" Mirth, fire, and hope, and feeling, magic boy!

LXXV.

"But time it is to break the revels up,
"And time it is to tread,—not upon earth;"—
So saying, quickly vanish'd fruit, and cup,
And fay, and every thing of fairy birth.
Without them, the boy's heart felt a strange dearth
Of objects for his thought: the queen had gone,—
And then all other things were little worth;—
But late and lovely had the night come down,
And he was very rapt, and he was all alone.

LXXVI.

He look'd up to the sky, which quickly threw
A life into his mind. The stars were light,
Sprinkling the skiey fields with heavenly dew,
Or gemming well the raven hair of night:
From earth he sent his spirit on its flight,
To dream, wandering amidst them; and there came
A thought to him, that as those orbs were bright,
Brighter in darkness,—he might be the same,
And in a gloomy age make starlight of his name.

LXXVII.

And glorious is the fate of him who rears
His name as a proud column on the earth,—
Round which the withering tempest of long years
Lingers, yet leaves it strong as at its birth.
It keeps high splendour. Never is there dearth
Of those who bend to it as glory's goal;
To thousands it gives elevated worth,
And points the pride of spirit. 'Mid the roll
Of dangerous times it stands, the landmark of the soul.

LXXVIII.

" My heart, all youthful, hath one passion towering
" O'er all the other passions—'tis for Fame!
" Whatever storms around my head be lowering,
" Still be endurance high,—and hope the same.
" It is the diet of my heart—the aim
" Of my full spirit—and let others lie
" The while the rust of time creeps o'er their name,
" Wearing it from the world for aye,—while I
" So consecrate my name, that it shall never die.

LXXIX.

" Were it not glorious at one vigorous bound
" To spring, all life, upon the wings of Time,
" And never more to touch the soiling ground,
" But float for ever, and through every clime,
" The wonder of all lands? Oh, flight sublime!
" Give me but this,—and I will throw this form
" Back to its fellow earth, that cannot climb:
" What matters that the body glut the worm,
" So as the spirit flies proud o'er each worldly storm!"

LXXX.

So sigh'd our lonely deep enthusiast,
While stretch'd upon his old ancestral earth;—
Ah! wheresoever we are call'd or cast,
Still have we yearnings of immortal birth;—
Which whether they be well or nothing worth,
Are yet the eagles of the lofty mind:—
So in that old—old wood—amid the dearth
Of natural sounds he did unhood, unbind,
His falcon soul, whose wing was wilder than the wind.

LXXXI.

Good heaven! it was a very blessed night,
And dull with beauty;—all things were at rest:
From the wide heavens to the green leaves light,
Slumber reign'd heavily. On the lake's breast
Sleep sat, and all its heaving heart oppress'd:
A silence lean'd along the lifeless air,
And nature bow'd beneath it, and was bless'd.—
The enthusiast rose and homeward did repair,
With loitering feet,—and mind that stray'd it knew
not where.

LXXXII.

'Tis the first breathing mellow morn of May,—
The rose of months,—the violet of the year;—
Stepping in blossoms white, a virgin day,
To feed our eyes with sweetness;—not severe,
But gentle is her cheek:—and smiles appear
On mine, while I am writing, to behold
Her presence o'er the silver clouds, and here
To feel her very breath, that laughs all cold
To scorn.—Ah! can the heart that tastes it e'er
grow old?

LXXXIII.

It will not; for the heart is not for age,
That hath most deeply revell'd in the May;
It carries youth along,—like a light page
Attendant on a lover,—to the day
Of regular death. The first spring flowers that play,
Dance through all years in the eternal mind;
And I, who now am sitting in the ray,
Telling this fairy tale,—a gladness find,
That will go through my life like falcons down the wind.

LXXXIV.

No more of this. Yet could I not refrain
From breaking off my history, to give
A welcome to the May. And now I chain
My mind to what 's perchance as fugitive.
Oft would the boy amid the shadows live
Of the deep forest,—and the fairy pleasure
Was stored up in his heart as in a hive,—
And "riches fineless" was that golden treasure,
Gather'd from those, in whom "life was a dance—a measure."

LXXXV.

His time exhaled away, as odour from
A mossy rose that dies where it is born;
Serenity was inmate of his home,
And sylvan joy was ready night and morn
To do him courtesy,—his days unworn
Went by him, as the water by the willow;
And though it was his nature to be lorn,
His moods came o'er him rather on the pillow,
Than when he heard the birds, or watch'd the lake's light billow.

LXXXVI.

Two summers pass'd away, like two sweet children
That go in quiet beauty to the grave; [wildering
When books of quaint research brought their be-
Over the youngster's mind:—and Fancy gave
Her wings a wider flight, and she did wave
Tow'rds men, and tow'rds the cities where they cluster;—
And he did find one friend whose heart was brave
With doubt; who ample questionings could muster,
Which would with clouds inclose a mind of purest lustre.

LXXXVII.

How is it that the minds of mortals jar
In what should be their music and their joy?
The spirit, which might make itself a star,
Doth wrap itself in clouds, and all destroy
The innocent and lofty heart, and toy
With idle questionings of serious things?—
Is it that men were made themselves to annoy
With dreams of ill, and mystic ponderings,
And doubts of old religion, and the bliss she brings.

LXXXVIII.

The friend was stern to all save him, and cold
With high wrought caution,—full of fancies strange;
A lover of the heathen times of old,—
A questioner of all things in the range
Of lofty hopes—a worshipper of change
In human practices—a denizen
In scenes which he reviled:—he would estrange
Men from their faith;—and smooth his words were, when
Such were to win the hearts and thoughts of quiet men.

LXXXIX.

This world was all he credited,—which gave
To his retired hours a dreariness;
Oblivion was the spirit of the grave,
And chance lent life its ills and happiness,—
So deem'd he,—ah! how sore was his distress
By night, and in his meditative hours!—
Hope had for him no soft blue eye—no tress
Of golden hair—no fair and lovely bowers;
The soul was mortal all, like Summer's heedless flowers.

XC.

This wise friend marr'd the youngster's innocence,
Put poison in the cup of his content;
Made him no more a joyer in the sense
Of forest comfort;—turn'd his mental bent
To other scenes,—ah! scenes how different!
And did estrange him from the oak and pine.—
"Was it for such as he,"—the friend would vent
His converse thus,—"to keep a mind supine,—
"A mind that might among the great and lofty shine!"

XCI.

And then he set the young thoughts straying wide,
Through metaphysic labyrinths,—which none
Have ever yet explored;—and then the pride
Of youth he did awaken with a store
Of flatteries,—and promises of more
From learned men in cities of the wise:
The world in his adoring language wore
A hue to dazzle the enthusiast's eyes,
And of his heart to make a fatal sacrifice.

XCII.

The distant world now wooed the boy, who knew
Nought of its deadly sorrows; he would deem,
So friendship taught him, that its hearts were true,
And all things faithful as at first they seem;
The distant world came to him like a dream,
Dress'd in its fair deceit,—its presence brought
A strange wild melancholy,—and the gleam
Of far off things play'd o'er his mind, and wrought
Wishes all wild,—strange hopes,—and a delirious thought.

XCIII.

As yet he was a stranger to all strife,
Save that which nature makes, and that to him
Was the soul's harmony, the spirit's life:—
The prospect of the world was distant—dim,—
And yet he deem'd it bright; but that wild whim,
Which in young hearts doth bear the name of Hope,
Fill'd up his cup of error to the brim:—
He panted for the world,—and down the slope
Tow'rds it he fain would bound like the slim antelope.

XCIV.

The slumbers of his bed were visited
By visions, shadowy of his mind and fate;
His sleep anticipated life,—and led
Events to him before their time:—elate
He rose, resolved at times to terminate
His dreaming with the like realities:
But oft his sleep gave gloom;—and one night, late,
A strange and dreary vision did arise:
That in the forest deep he lay with musing eyes;

XCV.

That when he lifted them,—before him stood
A figure tall, and in a shadowy dress:
It was as some lone spirit of the wood,
With eyes all dim, and fixed with distress,—
And sunken cheeks,—and lips of pallidness,—
Standing with folded arms, and floating hair,
The shadow of a woman!—but a tress
Was sometimes lifted by the gusty air,
And now the waved robe a heaving breast did bare.

XCVI.

He gazed—his hand paused on a turning leaf,
And his blood ran in coldness to his heart:—
He gazed—but still his eyes felt no relief;
For that dim lonely form would not depart:
It stood—as prison'd there by mystic art,
Looking upon him steadily;—he tried
To utter speech, but not a word would start
From his weak lips—his very feelings died,
As he beheld that spirit of melancholy pride!

XCVII.

" I know thee, boy—and thou wilt know me better
" Ere many years be past,"—the spirit said;
" Of late thou hast pined to wear an earthly fetter,
" And wish'd these woods by thee untenanted.
" I've read thy inmost mind; and I have sped—
" My wing is rapid as the wing of Time—
" To wreak thy wish: the fault be on thy head;
" Since 'tis thy will those bounding hills to climb,
" And pass into the world, I'll crown that wayward crime.

XCVIII.

" Thou knowest not the happiness that lies
" In this romantic home, or thou would'st not
" Seek in cold cities for it; thy young eyes
" Have seen no other than a guileless spot,
" A wood as peaceful as a fairy grot,—
" Leaf-canopied,—and peopled all with deer,
" And birds: the world thou seek'st will change thy lot;
" There wilt thou meet with bitterness and fear,
" And in thy very heart,—the form thou seest here"

XCIX.

It vanish'd—and his slumber vanish'd too;
But not with that the frightful recollection:
The shape—the shadowy hair—the snowy hue
Of the dooming lip—the desolate dejection
Of the whole form, sank him in mute reflection
Day after day. He sought his friend, and told
The terrors of his mind; but no election
Was left him to depart or stay, for old
And cunning scoff that friend before him did unfold.

C.

The die was in the air—it fell—and he
Prepared to quit a home which long had been
Serene and beautiful as home could be,—
To quit it for the bustle of a scene
Where men were thickly sown, associates keen,
And passion prey'd upon as common food.
Ah! what could ere restore to him the green
Before his cottage door—the magic wood—
And all the nooks that fill'd his ancient solitude!

CI.

It was indeed a solitude become:—
At evening—late—the last he would be there,
After the sun was set he stray'd from home,
And hurried through the arched wood, to where
The lake lay in its slumber mild and fair;
No music sounded—nought was heard to sound
That spake of fairies—silence wooed the air—
The leaves just rustled on the trees around,
And a benighted bee might murmur o'er the ground.

CII.

But all the fairies and their feasts were faded—
Gone from the earth, or hidden from his gaze;
A moment's hectic melancholy shaded
His youthful furrow'd forehead;—in amaze
He went away:—the images of days
Pass'd underneath the music of the pine,
And made more lovely from his own wild lays,
Took tribute from his heart, and from his eyne;—
But now the hour was come,—when grief he must decline.

CIII.

No word of sorrow from his mother came,—
But on her cheek there was the trace of tears,—
The paleness of mute sorrow—and the tame
Dejection which long suffering deeply sears
The heart with:—she had many tender fears,
But these she hush'd,—and bade him her farewell,
With something of a hope that busy years
Would wear away his dreaminess,—and quell
The wild moods of the mind,—which are unquellable.

CIV.

He left his home, array'd in pilgrim weed,
As he were bound for holy Palestine;
With staff and sandal-shoon he cross'd the mead
That lay before his cottage door:—the kine
Were at their evening meal, and the decline
Of the setting sun was beautiful to see:—
He turn'd for one last look—the eglantine—
The cot—the trees—the sunshine met his e'e,
And not without a tear might that last parting be.

POEMS.

DEVON.

DEVON!

The smile of summer is upon thy woods,
The breath of summer is upon thy sea;—
Would I were thine!—when last I linger'd with thee,
It was a dreary season, and the day
Slept pillow'd upon clouds, mocking the night;
The wind aye wander'd through the sullen woods,
And found no leaf to touch its voice with pity;
The troublous sound of water was about,
Startling the uncouth air;—'twas vacant all:
Old winter frown'd upon the staring sea.
But oh! I saw thee at a lovelier tide,

And grew enamour'd of thee;—Autumn then
Was busy plucking all her golden leaves,
Or listening to the blackbird's fitful song,
Whistled in her hollow woods;—and the light flowers
Were nodding prettily at the fickle bees,
That left them heedlessly.—I will be with thee!
My heart shall haunt the spots it loved the best,
Borne on by that strange voyager, the mind.
Though caged in cities, still my thoughts are free
To visit the green fields, and beautiful woods,
And rivulets, that chaunt a lowly ditty
In the sleepy ear of summer,—and the sea,
That talks for ever to the quiet sands.
Nor from my bodily sight are beauties held:
The sky is open to me,—and the sun,—
That golden traveller o'er the patient heavens;
And the sweet moon that is a-bathing ever
In the blue untroubled waters of the sky;
The changing clouds; and those perpetual stars,
The silent watchers from eternity!

Beautiful Devon!

Receive me, now a mental visitor,
Into thy green retreats: young Memory
Shall be my mild attendant.—'Tis to her,
And to that fairy of the soul, sweet Hope,
I owe the light of life. The first doth sketch
Features, and favorite scenes,—and breathe dear tones
Into my charmed ears,—and deck with stars
The dreary night of Time. And blue-eyed Hope
Shows me a sunny distance—lends me joys,
Bright as the wild eyes of the nightingale,
And rapturous as her song.
And now I bend me to my favorite wood:—
Here is the gentle flower "forget me not,"
As simple and as fresh of hue as ever.
How still and beautiful are all the trees!
The leaves are strangely bright;—and, through the branches,
Their golden threads are weaved by the sun:—
Perchance the god Apollo here hath wander'd,
And left his rich lute, strung with chords of light,

Mid the leaves in which he play'd. Methinks I hear
Sounds of his song divine—afar—afar—
Dying through Echo's shell!—I do remember
Those who were with me when I last was here,—
Peace be within the dear loved hearts of both!
We gather'd wood flowers,—some, blue as the vein
O'er Hero's eyelid stealing,—and some as white
In the clustering grass, as rich Europa's hand
Nested amid the curls on Jupiter's forehead,
What time he snatch'd her through the startled waves;—
Some purple too, such as in Enna's meadows
Forsook their own green homes and parent stalks,
To kiss the fingers of Proserpina;
And some were small as fairies' eyes, and bright
As lover's tears!—We gather'd, as we stray'd,
These dewy stars of the wood; and one dear hand
Became their beautiful and silvery vase:
Sweet flowers, how sweetly held!—Hark! hear ye not?
The streamlet in that dell is not at rest,—
'Tis muttering something to the drowsy wood.

Once, how adown the brambles wild I broke,
To trace the hidden murmurer: How oft,
In solitary hours, the lonely sound
Of that obscure and melancholy stream
Comes blending with my thoughts!
Now upward winding,
I rise above the trees, and look upon
A sea of wood, with all its billowy leaves
Rolling in heavy sunshine,—and one field,
Like a green island, pleasant and at rest.—
Thou madcap bird! thy sudden gush of song,
Pour'd out through amber leaves, hath startled me
Into a wild delight:—thou sing'st, and then
Spreadest thy wings, as though it were thy wish
To chase the giddy song. Be ever here,
Free to the leaves, a summer chorister,
A feather'd spirit of peace and airy pleasure.
There *was* a cottage,—but I see it not,—
Where in a dreaming mood I once had wish'd
To have dwelt for life:—Ah! do I wish it now?
Our fanciful desires depart as fast

As they are framed ;—some solid purpose comes,—
And they fleet from us like the sunned snow.
Old wood, farewell !
I'll bless thee when my feet again return
Into thy peaceful grass.
Here, on a hill, I stretch
My form along in boyish happiness.—
Here is the stile on which I quietly sat
In the sunny morn,—and there, the wandering Sid,
With its lilac flowers :—and lo ! beneath me lies
The huge majestic sea. I hear it not—
But I can see it curling to the shore,
And whitening on the yellow beach. The sun—
The only eye worthy to watch the sea,—
Is shedding diamonds to enrich the waves,
That rise to catch them. All my being seems
To swell with o'erwrought feelings,—and to shake
With thronging thoughts,—and to be well nigh sick
With vain surmises, and deep yearnings, that
I might associate with the enormous sun,
Or be a lone companion to the sea.

Tremendous thoughts come o'er us, when we gaze,
With all the mind weighing upon the eyes,
At the huge sea—the sun!—A wearing pain
Clings heavily to the heart:—a consciousness
Of mortal want, of fatal poverty,
Haunts all the waking soul. The full relief
Is some romantic dream which hides the earth,
Some momentary and most strange possession
Of an ideal vastness, or the voice
Of that intense sure hope which ne'er betrays.

The ocean old hath my deep reverence,—
And I could watch it ever:—when it sleeps,
And its hush'd waves but throb at intervals,
Like some fair infant's breath in sad repose,—
'Tis strangely sweet to gaze; or when it starts
At the voice of the torturing storm, and like mad
age,
Tosses its hoar-hair on the raving wind,
'Tis wild delight to watch it. But I love
To see it gently playing on loose rocks,
Lifting the idle sea-weed carelessly;

Or hear it in some dreary cavern, muttering
A solitary legend of old times.
  The gentle memory of many things
Is hovering o'er my brain,—of breathing eves
When the curl'd moon was up, and the lonely star
Was quietly dwelling in its own blue world;—
Of nights that found me listening to the grief,
And the wild ditties of the young Ophelia,—
Or seeing Juliet o'er her lattice leaning,
In the soft, passioned moon. Ah! might I live
For ever near the sea—the fields—the wood—
To watch the day go by on golden wings,
Woo the lone morn that sleeps in balmy light,
And kiss the quiet breath from Evening's lips.
  But now my fancies do in part subside,
And set realities come o'er me; now
The visionary scenes have fleeted from me,
And left me lonely in this populous city.
The mind hath, like the sea, its swells and sinkings,
Its turbulence, its tremblings, and its sleep;
Sway'd by the very temper of the elements.

No bird sings now its rash enchanting lay
In my startled ear; no green and careless wave
Vexeth the indolent pebble on the beach;
No solitary bee rocks the wild-flower,
Or hangs upon the air with drowsy humming;
No rustling of gold leaves is heard; no song
Framed by the moist lips of the pilgrim brook:—
All these are quiet now, or only heard
Like mellow'd murmurings of the distant sea.

SONG.

1.

Go, where the water glideth gently ever,
  Glideth by meadows that the greenest be;—
Go, listen to our own beloved river,
    And think of me!

2.

Wander in forests, where the small flower layeth
  Its fairy gem beside the giant tree;
Listen the dim brook pining while it playeth,
    And think of me!

3.

Watch when the sky is silver pale at Even,
  And the wind grieveth in the lonely tree;
Go out beneath the solitary heaven,
    And think of me!

4.

And when the moon riseth as she were dreaming,
  And treadeth with white feet the lulled sea;
Go, silent as a star beneath her beaming,
    And think of me!

LINES TO A VALLEY.

SWEET Ide! thy green remembering
Is like the foot-print of young Spring
Over my heart, and I shall be
Secure of youth in feeling thee.
Thy valley, Ide! can never die
From the stored pictures of mine eye;
But in the waste of faded years
Shine beautiful as Morning's tears
On heath forlorn. The sloping meadow,
That leads us to the mellow'd shadow
Of wreathed trees, and bars away
The view of city old and gray,
And laps our hearts in balmy ease
Among the quiet cottages,
Is a calm pillow for the Sun
To spread his golden hair upon.

Mine autumn evening! sweet wert thou,
When welcom'd on that meadow's brow;
But sweeter when, amid the trees,
I listen'd to the singing bees
Down in the vale—and saw the skies
All blazon'd with the streams, that rise
Purple and golden in the west,
And float o'er Heaven's eternal breast;
Ethereal rivers, that do stain
With gorgeous waves the silver plain
Of the sweet world above us,—where
By night the starry islands are.
Was I not happy in the sight
Of that rich wide world o'er me,—light
Of heart, to feel the mighty earth
A sleeping thing,—calm as the birth
Of cowslips on enchanted eves,
When fairies open their dim leaves;—
To dream amid the inwoven trees,
Which are autumnal palaces,

Pillar'd and golden roof'd;—to walk
To the music of enraptured talk,
Falling from ever happy lips,
Whose lustre knoweth no eclipse;—
To feel the hymning of the breeze,
And listen to the mellow bees;—
To con with deep romantic pleasure
At airy sounds, some echoing measure,
And call up picturing poesy
To mock the beauty of the sky!
Was I not happy as a tree
In blossoming orchard, to be free
From heavy strangers, and the press
Of dull acquaintance, that distress
The bosom's patience,—and to see
Those—those I loved the best, with me!
I had an hour of that calm time
We read of in the forest rhyme
Of pastoral poet. The sweet air
Play'd round me, like Apollo's hair,

Rich, soft, and full of melody.
The bird sang late upon the tree
Its lonely song. The hush of night
Was born before its time: the light
Seem'd left unusually alone
In the wide heavens,—and the tone
Of our own voices was endued
With the mellowness of solitude.

I say but feebly what I feel
Of thee, sweet Ide! but I will steal
Again to thee at autumn-tide,
With one who loves thee at my side,—
And give deep honoring thoughts to thee
Of joyous, young serenity.

THE WOOD.

WHENCE is the secret charm of this lone wood,
Which in the light of evening mildly sleeps?
I tread with lingering feet the quiet steeps,
Where thwarted oaks o'er their own old age brood;
And where the gentler trees in summer weather
Spring up all greenly in their youth together:
And the grass is dwelling in a silent mood,
And the fir-like fern its under-forest keeps
In a strange stillness. My wing'd spirit sweeps
Forth as it hath been wont; nor stays with me,
Like some domestic thing that loves its home.
It goes a-dreaming o'er the imagery
Of other scenes, which from afar do come,
Matching them with this indolent solitude.
Here—I am dwelling in the days gone by—
And under trees which I have known before:

My heart with feelings old is running o'er,
And I am thrill'd—thrill'd at an evening sky.
The present seems a mockery of the past,
And all my thoughts glide by me, like a stream
That seeks a home,—that shines beneath the beam
Of the summer sun,—and wanders through sweet meads,
In which the joyous wildflower meekly feeds,—
And strays, and wastes away in woods at last.
My thoughts o'er many things glance silently;
But to this olden forest creep, and cling fast.
Imagination, ever wild and free,
With heart as open as the naked sea,
Can consecrate whate'er it looks upon:
And Memory, that maiden never alone,
Cons o'er the tale of life. While I can see
This blue, deep sky—that sun so proudly setting
In the haughty west—that spring patiently wetting
The shadowy dell—these trees so tall and fair,
That have no visitors but the birds and air;
And hear those leaves a gentle murmur keep,

Like brooks that make soft music in their sleep;
The melting of young waters in the dells;
The jingle of the loose flock's lulling bells;
While these all mingling o'er my senses sweep,
I need not doubt but I shall ever find
Things, that will feed the cravings of my mind.
My happiest hours were pass'd with those I love
On steeps; in dells with shadowy trees above;
And therefore it may be my soul ne'er sleeps,
When it is in a pastoral solitude;
And such may be the charm of this lone wood,
Which in the light of evening sweetly sleeps.

STANZAS

WRITTEN IN AN ALBUM.

1.

Hour after hour departs,
  Recklessly flying!
The golden time of our hearts
  Is fast a-dying!
Oh! how soon will it have faded!—
Joy droops, with forehead shaded,
  And Memory starts!

2.

When I am gone—oh! wear
  Sweet smiles; thy dwelling

Choose, where the flowers feed the air,
  And the sea is swelling:
And near where some rivulet lingers
In the grass, like an infant's fingers
  In its mother's hair.

3.

Thy spirit should steep its wing
  In the dews of nature;
And the living airs of Spring
  Should give each feature
Of thy face a rich lustrous smiling,—
Thy thoughts from that gloom beguiling,
  Which cold hours bring.

4.

Farewell to our delights!
  Love,—we are parted!
Come with thy silvery nights,
  Autumn, gold-hearted!

Let our two hearts be wreathing
Their hopes, when the eve is breathing
  Through leaf-starr'd lights!

MATIN-SONG.

1.

The day's wan light breaks fair and far,
  The wave is restless on the stream;—
Dallying with the morning star,
  It rocks the slight and silvery beam.

2.

Freshly the heart of day is breathing!
  The wild-flower trembles for the bee:—
On ocean's cheek a smile is wreathing,
  Tenderly and merrily!

3.

The sky-lark leaves its nest,
With pearls upon its breast;—
From its nested sedge the crowned swan
glides, slow,—
And forth into the morning, like the light,
doth go!

SONG.

1.

THAT peasant girl's blue eyes
  Are beauty's stars to me;
They 're not like Summer skies,
  Nor like the deep blue sea;—
Nor of the harebell's hue—
And yet they are sweetly blue!

2.

That peasant girl is fair,—
  And, when your eyes behold

Her white hand wreathe her hair,
  'Tis ivory lost in gold;—
But still you 'll turn to woo
Those eyes so sweetly blue!

SONNET.

WRITTEN UNDER A PICTURE.

Lone Cot! most placidly in thy green nest
  Thou cowerest, like the white bird of the wood,
  Birds and high trees are all thy neighbourhood—
And silence is the joy thou lovest best.
I've seen thee, in the mantling evening drest,
  Wear thy wan beauty so—that, oh! I would
  Never abandon that delightful mood
In which I found thee in thy radiant vest.

Thou wert to me a dream of days to come,
  The fairy spirit of a vision'd spot,

Where Hope and Love might build themselves a
home,
And bid long farewell to a worldly lot.
The dream was idle as the ocean foam—
Yet still it *was* my dream, thou lonely Cot!

SONNET TO ———

WITH THE TWO FOLLOWING.

ROBIN the outlaw! Is there not a mass
  Of freedom in the name?—It tells the story
  Of clenched oaks, with branches bow'd and hoary,
Leaning in aged beauty o'er the grass;—
Of dazed smile on cheek of border lass
  Listening 'gainst some old gate at his strange glory:
  And of the dappled stag, struck down and gory,
Lying with nostril wide in green morass.

It tells a tale of forest days—of times
  That would have been most precious unto thee:

Days of undying pastoral liberty :—
Sweeter than music old of abbey chimes—
Sweet as the virtue of Shakspearian rhymes—
Days, shadowy with the magic green-wood tree!

SONNET TO ——

THE trees in Sherwood forest are old and good,—
  The grass beneath them now is dimly green;
  Are they deserted all? Is no young mien
With loose-slung bugle met within the wood:
No arrow found,—foil'd of its antler'd food,—
  Struck in the oak's rude side? Is there nought
    seen,
  To mark the revelries which there have been,—
In the sweet days of merry Robin Hood?

Go there, with Summer, and with evening,—go
  In the soft shadows like some wandering man,—

And thou shalt far amid the forest know
The archer men in green, with belt and bow,
  Feasting on pheasant, river-fowl, and swan,
  With Robin at their head, and Marian.

SONNET

TO THE SAME.

With coat of Lincoln green and mantle too,
  And horn of ivory mouth, and buckle bright,
  And arrows wing'd with peacock-feathers light,
And trusty bow well gather'd of the yew,—
Stands Robin Hood:—and near, with eyes of blue
  Shining through dusk hair, like the stars of night,
  And habited in pretty forest plight,—
His green-wood beauty sits, young as the dew.

Oh gentle-tressed girl! Maid Marian!
  Are thine eyes bent upon the gallant game

That stray in the merry Sherwood: thy sweet fame
Can never, never die. And thou, high man,
Would we might pledge thee with thy silver Can
Of Rhenish, in the woods of Nottingham!

SONNET.

SWEET poets of the gentle antique line,
  That made the hue of beauty all eterne,
  And gave earth's melodies a silver turn,—
Where did you steal your art so right divine?—
Sweetly ye memoried every golden twine
  Of your ladies' tresses:—teach me how to spurn
  Death's lone decaying and oblivion stern
From the sweet forehead of a lady mine.

The golden clusters of enamouring hair
  Glow'd in poetic pictures sweetly well;—

Why should not tresses dusk, that are so fair
  On the live brow, have an eternal spell
In poesy?—dark eyes are dearer far
  Than orbs that mock the hyacinthine-bell.

SONNET

ON THE PICTURE OF A LADY.

Sorrow hath made thine eyes more dark and keen,
And set a whiter hue upon thy cheeks,—
And round thy pressed lips drawn anguish streaks,
And made thy forehead fearfully serene.
Even in thy steady hair her work is seen,
For its still parted darkness—till it breaks
In heavy curls upon thy shoulders—speaks
Like the stern wave,—how hard the storm hath been!

So look'd that hapless lady of the South,
Sweet Isabella! at that dreary part

Of all the passion'd hours of her youth;
  When her green basil pot by brothers' art
Was stolen away:—so look'd her pained mouth
  In the mute patience of a breaking heart!

SONNET.

Art thou now sitting by thine evening fire,
  Reading our natural Shakspeare; art thou playing
  Lone melodies;—or listening to the saying
Of thy dear sisters, or thy placid sire;—
Or do thine eyes, loving the heavens, admire
  The very gentle moon that seems a-maying
  Mid the bright stars?—I think I see thee straying
In thy fawn-colour'd and most sweet attire!—

I know not what delights thee—where thou art—
  But white Simplicity doth lead with care

Thy pleasures:—oh! might I but linger where
Thou lingerest,—and take a gentle part
In music,—or thy walks, thy books;—and share
In the divine enjoyments of thy heart!

EPISTLE TO ———

" For there is nothing either good or bad; but
" Thinking makes it so."—

Shakspeare.

THE day is waning,—and my walk is over
Beneath the joyous sun, which, like a lover,
Is wending to his loved one in the West:—
(Ah! that my feet the same sweet journey press'd!)
Gently the amber evening sleeps in Heaven,
And in its sleep serenest smiles are given.
The blossoms on the pear-tree cluster white,
And meekly wear the veil of golden light,
Which falls in quiet round them from the sun,
Like beauty o'er a dedicated nun.

My Annie dear! perchance on eves like these,
With gladness underneath the budding trees,
Thou walkest with thy sisters in sweet talk,
Or by the sea takest a lonely walk,
Thinking of them, and (can I wholly be
Without the hope?)—giving a thought to me!—

Thy letter of quick kindness found me, Annie!—
And so you think my cravings all too many!—
And rally me with veil'd austerity,
Or feelings which are keen—to none but me!
Far, far I sojourn from the form I love,
And some few feelings live in me, that move
Like aspen-leaves, and to the slightest wind,—
And yearnings rise from an unresting mind,
Perchance o'erwrought,—but not for aught that may
Fall on myself—oh no!—the bitter day
Hath been, and I have borne it—ay, and now
Health and a freshen'd hope are on my brow,

As they had never vanish'd,—but for Her,—
My hopes, and fears, and feelings, rise and stir,
And hunger after tidings:—these are not
So much the pain of thine, as of my lot.
If I have been too wearying,—bear with me,
With all the love I ever found in thee,—
Nor yet those sleepless feelings e'er deride,
Which pain my breast and hurt no thing beside!—

Oh! could I walk with thee in days like these,
When the young leaf is venturing on the trees,—
And the pale blossom on the cherry bough
Lives in its beauty,—as I see it now;—
I should be happier than the linnet's wing
Spread in the first mild sunlight of the spring!
Oft do I see thee, as I lonely lean
In these soft evenings, which are as serene
In their cerulean skies, and setting suns,
And clouds gold-feather'd,—as the summer ones;—

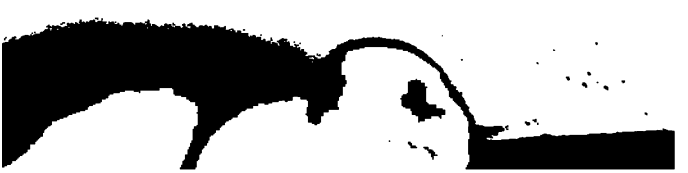
Oft do I see thee in my thoughts,—that take
Westerly wanderings,—thy enjoyment make
From the enchantments of an evening sea
That weaves its own sweet pastime merrily,—
Or sleeps beneath some sea-nymph's waving wands;—
Or as it fawns upon the golden sands
With never ending kisses, and soft sighs,—
I see thee lingering o'er its harmonies,
As though some spirit did converse with thee
Of worlds divine, where shatter'd hearts shall be
Ever at rest, amid Elysian bowers,
Lull'd with the music of the lute-fed hours.—
The silver sea-foam on the sands thou lovest,
That at thy feet is dying, as thou rovest,
And brightening up again—as mourners' eyes
That fade and sparkle while the spirits rise:
Dear is the mystic world of waters, when
Day hath departed from the eyes of men,
And that devoted haunter of the sky,
The lonely moon, is lingering thoughtfully

Over the bosom of the sleeping sea,—
That trembles in its dreams. For then to thee
Steals that long line of pure and silver light
Across the waters, which all starry bright
Doth from the chasten'd Deity seem to come,
To bear thy white thoughts to a happy home!—

Of late there hath been many a silent eve,
Rosy as wreaths which lady-fingers weave
For soft brown tresses on a revel night,—
And gentle as the bird that takes its flight
From Cytherea's finger.—Lonely sitting
On one of these fair eves,—and idly knitting
My thoughts,—as many a cottage spinster doth
Her web,—in mood, half industry, half sloth:—
I sat into the twilight late, and caught
Old days and green joys in the net of thought:
And many a dear departed scene arose
And pass'd away,—like birds from their repose,

Startled by heedless feet in morning grass;—
And sylvan pleasures, in a joyous mass,
Revived about my heart, and died again—
Touching the next few moments with dim pain.
I thought of those I loved—I thought of thee—
And of our pastime when the night was free—
The bustle of the books—the lonely notes
Of a melancholy melody that floats
For ever and for ever through the mind,—
Leaving a sad and sweet delight behind!
I thought of *Him*,—the deathless—the inspired—
Whose light my very earliest boyhood fired,—
And of his rich creations:—have we not
Sorrow'd at high Macbeth's distorted lot—
Sigh'd over Hamlet's sweet and 'wilder'd heart—
And, when we came upon that piteous part
Of love's romance, where long before 'twas day
The Ladye of the moonlight pined away,
Over the sleeping fruitage—passion-pale,—
Have we not loved young Juliet?—and the wail

Of Lear swoon'd round the heart—and still the tear
Wrung from meek Desdemona, by the austere
And darkling madness of her Moorish lord,
Was dear to us,—and many a sorrowing word
Of tender pity dropt at the wild fate
Of one so young and so disconsolate!
And now my thoughts turn'd to the heavy sea,
That weighs for aye, "Though inland far we be:"—
I heard it plainly gathering—curling—thundering—
With eye rock-still and heart chill'd up with wondering:—
It came with glassy curve, and dreary brightness,
And dash'd itself into a cloud of whiteness,—
And kept a stunning noise that never ceased
In my crazed ears.—But these rough thoughts decreased,—
And lightly o'er green waters of the summer,
The merry sunlight was a joyous comer,—
Strewing its golden wealth along the way,
To mingle with the silver of the spray:



The waves, like infants, join'd in heedless bands,
And chased each other on the placid sands;
The day was bright,—as days in summer are,—
And thou,—methought,—and those I love, were
there!

But these are idle dreams that cheat me, Annie!—
And through my life these dreams have aye been
many,—
Leading me oft with faithless witchery
To pant for glories which could never be:
Taunting my soul with fame—to make the waking
A thing of momentary spirit-breaking.
'Tis ever thus with youth—Ambition leads
The heart to gaze at high and dangerous deeds,
And leads it to its fall—Hope sits afar,
Cresting the distance like a lonely star,
Holding a shadowy cup which fades away
Just as the lip its thirstings would allay.

Why is not youth contented with its own?—
No living things, but what are human, moan
With feverish aspirations after change:—
The slim deer loves its own wide forest range,
Nor pines for sunny fields—the lion roams
O'er the hot desart to his wooded homes,
And is content:—the eagle from his dwelling
Screams its wild joy on top of old Helvellyn,
Or watches from his lonely rocks the sun
With that majestic patience known to none
Of mortal mould—Hearts that are human, pine,
While gazing at that orb, to be divine!—
The world is knowledge to us—but for years
Gain'd, we lose quietude, and trust, and tears,
(Those dew-drops of young nature); and we wear
The comfortless dark garmentry of care.
Then follows thirst of change, and cheerless age,
And prayers for an immortal pilgrimage
To that untroubled region of the blest,
Where bruised and broken hearts are all at rest!—

But fare thee well—I wear thee, Annie dear!
With moralizings which are half austere,
And "dry as summer-dust"—moods of the mind
Which long departing sickness leaves behind:—
Pratings of mental wanderings, not worth
A thought from thee,—unless a thought of mirth.—

But now the light hath faded, and the trees
With their young leaves are dingy images
Seen clear against the milky-colour'd sky;—
Farewell! I breathe towards the West a sigh
For thee—for others too—and for the hour
When I shall walk before the garden bower!

The evening hath departed—and the blue
Of heaven is all obscured—once more, adieu!

May 1817.

TO F—— B——.

AGED THREE YEARS.

" Even so this happy creature of herself
" Is all sufficient: Solitude to her
" Is blithe society."

Wordsworth.

As young and pretty as the bud
Of the strawberry in the wood;
As restless as the fawn that 's there,
Playing like a thing of air,—
Chasing the wind, if there be any,—
Like these, art thou, my little Fanny!

I look on thee, and in thy face,
The life is there of childish grace:

I see the silent thought that breaks
Into young smiles as Fancy wakes;
And newly-wing'd Intelligence,
Trying its little flights from thence.
I see a strife 'twixt Health and Beauty,
Which shall the best achieve its duty;
A gentle strife, for both contend,
But both, like bees, their labours blend.

Thy cheek by Health is rounded well,
By its hand invisible;
But sweet and rosy hues there are,
And you may trace young Beauty there.
Health made thy gentle lips to be
So glad in their own company;
So lavish of the cherry's dies,
So like the leaf, when autumn flies;—
But Beauty claims thy young blue eyes.
And oh! thy little light soft hair,
Parted on thy forehead fair,

Doth seem to take its own delight
In leaning smooth and looking bright.
Thy figure small, and tiny feet,
Dotting the carpet round us, greet
Our hearts with joy, and feed the sense
Of love for utter innocence.

These beauties, Fanny, are to thee,
As yet, unknown society;—
And so they 're a befitting dress
For thy mental prettiness;—
For thy simple thoughts, that seem
Fragments of a summer dream;—
For thy merry lips' first sayings,
For thy fancy's fairy strayings:
Thou art wiser far than many
That in years are richer, Fanny!

The best of wisdom dwells with thee,
In thy white simplicity,—

In thy young imaginings,
Which float about on spotless wings;
In thy prattlings, kindly meant,
And in thy beautiful content.
Thine is the bloom of life, and we
Are jarrers in society,—
Opposers of each other's good,
Despoilers of all neighbourhood;
Prone to pain, and serious folly,
And framers of self-melancholy.
Thou dost wander light and free,
In thine own heart's company;
Making mirth, wherever chance
May lead thee in thy mazy dance:
Like the linnet wild, that weaves
Glad liberty amid the leaves.

Little copier of the lives
Of thy playmate relatives,—

Mocker of the elder ones,—
How thy wayward fancy runs,
By light from thine own laughing eyes,
Its circle of sweet mimicries.
Oft in thy little face, I find
The flitting shadows of the mind
Pass and repass, as thou dost tease
That mind with infant sophistries:—
And then, when no conclusion 's near,
Thou, like a true philosopher,
Dost seek the joyous heart again,
And leave at rest the little brain.

Fare thee well! I've found in thee
Blithe and sweet society;
Merriment in drooping pain,
Pictures, given back again,
Of the pranks of childishness,
Ere I tasted of distress.

Fare thee well!—may youth be slow
To pass from thee, who wear'st it so;
For years are but the links of care,
To one so innocent and fair!
Around thee joy, within thee truth,
Thou 'rt worthy of perpetual youth;—
Worthy of that delight which lies
Within thy blue and pleasant eyes;
Worthy thy mother's fond caressing:
I owe thee, Fanny, many a blessing,
For pranks of kindliness and glee,
And words of childish charity;
For pleasures generous, light, and many,—
And therefore do I bless thee, Fanny!

SONG.

WRITTEN TO A FAVOURITE AIR.

1.

By the river—by the river
The round moon is rising;
Like the water she glideth,
In silence and light!
The tree-shadow falleth
In tremulous beauty,
And the swan yet abideth
The wave of the night.

2.

By the river, by the river,
At evening—in summer,—

We have seen the moon rising,
  The same tender moon!
But we never, we never
  In summer,—at evening,—
Shall again steep our eyes in
  The balm of her boon!

THE

LADYE OF PROVENCE.

INTRODUCTORY STANZAS.

TO AZILE.

1.

Now, Azile! make this pleasant bank thy seat,
  A gentle tree o'ercanopies thy head;
And the evening airs, so soft and passing sweet,
  Are odorous voices from the rose's bed:
The azure water, gliding at thy feet
  In silence, seemeth to be fairy-led;
And all around, above thee, like thy breast,
Azile! is beautiful and full of rest.

2.

How tenderly the loved Evening treads
  With pearl-white feet the pathless quiet sky!

Sweet silence falleth on our bowed heads,
  As though a blessing and a boon from high!
Thy love, my Azile! on my heart now sheds
  A gentler balm; and in thy dark, dark eye,
Reposeth a serener, dearer light,—
Like the moon's lustre softening the deep night.

3.

Azile! I will beguile this gentle hour
  By telling thee a Provence tale, which thou
May'st deem as tender as the Provence flower;
  And it perchance may sadden thy sweet brow:—
'Tis from that old Italian, who did shower
  His hundred tales upon the heart:—and now
Listen, while I in thy fair ear rehearse
The story, tamed into Northern verse.

THE

LADYE OF PROVENCE.

In fair Provence, two goodly castles stood,
Neighbouring each other in their stately pride,
And facing the setting sun, whose rays they cast
Back on the evening from the sheening ivy
And gorgeous window pane. The lofty trees
In mighty clusters throng'd around the walls
Like palace-guards—and Quiet nested 'mid them,
With dove-like wings folded beside her breast.

Two high and antique Families, in love
And gentle friending, fill'd these castle halls.

Guiglielmo Gardastagno and his lady
(A fair young timid lover of her lord)
Inhabited the southern House—the other
Was the noble home, Francesco Virgillisi
Gave the divine and loving Indreana,
When from her father's halls and mother's tears
He led her, jewell'd with a costly heart,
To be his life-queen. Happily the days
Fled in the sweet Provence. The ladies met,
Talk'd of their hawks, their pages, and their lords,
Their palfreys lily-white—and slim light hounds,—
Their pearled ornaments and rich apparel,—
While they sat idly o'er their broidery;
And thus their gentle hearts, like two sweet roses,
By nearing to each other, grew united.
At tilts and tournaments, did Virgillisi
And Gardastagno well associate;
They were as brothers in their sports,—their joys,
Their wonted occupations,—and there never
Went by the day, but the wild forest boar

Burst from its lair, before two gallant Hunters,
Mounted alike,—and habited alike,
With spears of the self-same fashion. Side by side
They rode, like the godlike brothers of old,—and never
Fail'd in the sharing of the chase's dangers.
There you should see them skirting the deep wood,
In mantles greener than the sombre pine,—
And cheering on the hounds with voices, tuned
By long society to sound as one.
No better friends than the Lord Gardastagno
And Virgillisi ever held a hawk,
Nor tenderer creatures, than their ladies, ever
Indulged that pangless love that knows no sighs!

But rash untoward Passion brake and foil'd
The pleasure of these Houses. Gardastagno,
Forgetting his young wife,—forgetting all
The loyalty of friendship—and distract
By the so fearful and exceeding beauty

Of Indreana—fell from forest sports,
From tilts and knightly exercise, to dream
In Virgillisi's hall by one fair side,
The while she led her silken needle on
Its flowery way,—and there for hours he stood
Down gazing at her pearled fingers—lost
In wondering at the lustre of her brow,
And trembling at her eyes. Oh, Indreana!
Couldst thou not then have chill'd him with a look,
And chid him to the chase?—Alas! thine eye
Oft turn'd to his in serious light—and oft,
Surprised by a sigh, resought its work!
This lawless passion met with no rebuke,
And, patience-nursed, grew on to dangerous strength!

The young and innocent bride of Gardastagno
Suspected not the change;—but still she felt
A sad estrangement in her Indreana,
And did at times in tears entreat some cause,—
Entreat in vain,—and gather pain from silence.

Less oft they met;—Indreana framed excuse
For putting aside the visits as of old,—
And the timid lady—Gardastagno's wife,—
Went not abroad, but with a troubled heart
Pined in her chamber, like a wounded bird.

Not thus in ignorance did Virgillisi
Linger.—The clouds came gathering round at first,
And through their darkness truth but faintly lighten'd:
The time, with circumstance, illumed his mind!
And Gardastagno's treachery—and the sufferance,
The not unwilling sufferance, of wrong love
In Indreana's heart,—were plain as light.

Such broken amity and ruin'd hope
Madden'd the mind of Virgillisi.—Where,
Where could he turn for quiet?—That one friend,
Whose mind had been the storehouse of his griefs,
Was his dusk enemy—and to *her* heart,—
The once most sainted palace of his love,—

He could not breathe his prayers as he was wont;—
The spoiler had destroyed the shrine, and left
An image there, not of the chasten'd God!
What now shall stead the wither'd hopes of him,
Who, stripp'd of every friend,—must stand alone
In this huge world,—gall'd into solitude?

Yet—said I that no friend was left—that none
Remain'd unto his heart?—I err'd.—Revenge
Came whispering gloomy words, that made him smile.
Long, silent walks, o'er-shrouded by the boughs
Of sombre trees,—and chamber musings deep,—
And patient and concealed observation,—
Wrought Virgillisi's mind to its resolve,
And that resolve was Gardastagno's death.

Then light and free grew Virgillisi's spirit,
Clear'd of its indecision, and buoyed up
With one all-crowning purpose—and the lovers,
The lost and wretched pair of frail fond lovers,
Deem'd themselves unsuspected—and resign'd

Their passion to its dream. They walk'd, and read,
And gazed upon each other, even as two
Guiltless adorers in the heart of youth.
But Gardastagno's days were number'd out,
And Virgillisi waited for the hour!

There was a public tourney to be held,
At which all knights of courage and repute
Were call'd to the break of lance. The trumpet rang
Through the fair streets of France, and a public just
Was loud proclaimed to all men of fame.
Lord Virgillisi craved of Gardastagno
An evening's converse, upon arms, and steeds,
And all that might accomplish them, to meet
The gallant spirits of France within the lists.

The evening came—and Gardastagno rode
Below the castles, into a cool wood,—
A cool enchanting wood,—where the grass spread
Its gentlest verdure under arched trees,

And the yellow lustre of the evening sun
Flooded the topmost branches—and stream'd through
The broken foliage, down to the green grass.
He rode unarm'd and tenderly along,
And slowly, for a lustrous sunset gave
Its poesy to the heart—and they who love,
Cannot but idle when the eve is fair.
He threw the bridle o'er the neck of his horse,
And with it likewise loosed the rein of his mind.
" Why comes not Virgillisi?"—Thus he spake
Aloud in those mild shades—he was alone!—

" Oh Indreana! how my heart fleets back
" To thee, so soften'd by this passion'd eve!
" Where art thou?—Talking to thy perched hawk
" With straying thoughts?—or lingering 'mid thy flowers,
" Thyself the sweetest lily of them all?
" Or walking, with thy light and favourite hound
" Disporting pleasantly before thy steps?—

" I know not.—We are not together—that
" Is all I feel—and hapless we must be!"
Thus did he shame, with an unworthy love
And erring speech, the ear of hallow'd eve!
" Why comes not Virgillisi?—I will turn
" And seek his castle—and of Indreana
" Ask tidings of her lord!—Alas the word!"

He turn'd his steed.—Hark!—o'er the quiet grass
Came the sound and ring of steeled trappings,—loud,—
And louder,—and anon a knight was seen,
With two attendants,—armed from the crown
Down to the heel complete;—their faces hid
By the closed beaver;—and their steeled garments
Sheening and sounding in the golden sun.
They rode towards Gardastagno—and he check'd
His courser—marvelling at their near approach.

And with no curbed pace the knight came on.
He flash'd his sword in the startled light—and spurr'd

His black and rushing barb—and crying aloud:
" Alone—defenceless—dreaming of thy love
" And of no other wrong—I find thee here
" Fit offering to the God of my revenge.
" No barrier stands between my hunger'd sword
" And thy bad heart.—And thus I make them one!"
And sweeping onward, while he spoke, his hand,—
The hand of Virgillisi,—usher'd death
Into the breast of Gardastagno. There,
Without a word—without a sigh, he fell
Dead-struck, down plunged in the soiled grass.
He knew the voice of his wrong'd friend—and sought
No safety—death was near—and he could die.

Virgillisi loosed his beaver—and descended.
With cruel knife he open'd the dead breast
Of Gardastagno, and from thence out took
The ruddy heart, the heart that loved so well
Its murderer, till by passion gone distract—
And, wrapping it in the lance's bandelot,

Deliver'd it with care into the hands
Of his attendant—bidding him to silence!
So mounting on his horse—he left the body
Mangled and cold upon the blooded grass,
And sought his castle and his Indreana.

The sun had set—the deep wood-shadows fell
Heavily down to earth—and the night gusts
Of the chilling wind ruffled the lofty trees,
Making a dismal moaning, as for death.
Indreana sigh'd over her untouch'd lute,
Restless, because the evening came alone.

Virgillisi found her—all alone—and sitting
At the open lattice, gazing dreamingly
Over the orange trees at dusk of eve.
He kiss'd her joyless lip. "My love!" said he,
"Are thy thoughts chiding me for leaving thee,
"Leaving thee here, a lute but thy companion?"
"Not so, my lord," said Indreana—"never

" Can I give birth to chiding—I was lost
" In indolence and vacancy of mind.
" The air blows chilly—did not Gardastagno
" Promise that he would sup with us to-night?"
Virgillisi smiled a death smile to himself,
But smothering his black thoughts, he gently spake—
" His wife, my love, did crave his company,
" And I did yield him to that fond young thing.
" But come!—alone,—and loving as we do,
" Let us be happy in each other's thoughts.
" We'll sup together, sweet, shall we not so?"
The lady quieted her vexed heart,
And with a seeming kindness did consent.

Then leaving Indreana, Virgillisi
Went forth—and bade his servant thus—" Take this,
" This dainty heart of a wild boar, that I kill'd
" In the forest;—dress it in a goodly way,
" With sauces rich,—the best thou canst devise,—
" And serve it to us in a silver dish."

The servant sliced it cunningly and well,
And dressing it,—even with his utmost art,—
Made it of pleasant taste and grateful odour,
And served it to them in a silver dish.

Many fair speeches Virgillisi used
At supper to his lady—and he press'd
Her appetite so well, that at the last
She banqueted most freely on the heart.
Virgillisi saw her feed, with eager eyes,
And, when the delicate was nigh devour'd,
He said—"How like you, love, this fragrant food?
"How pleaseth it your taste?"—"Truly, my lord,
"Never the better loved I any dish!"
He answer'd, "Trust me, madam, I believe
"You love that dead, which gave you love in life."
She sank to silence—gazed upon the relics
With steady, pained eyes,—grew deathly pale—
And with a quiet voice at length did say,
"I pray you, sir, what meat is this you have given?

" Upon what dish have I been feeding now?"
In bitter voice then Virgillisi said,
" I will resolve thee, thou disloyal lady,
" I will resolve thee quickly to thy shame;—
" 'Tis Gardastagno's heart thou hast devour'd!
" These hands did gather it—I knew 'twould pleasure
" Thy most depraved fancy and false taste!
" His heart's torn casket lieth in the wood,—
" The heart itself thy body hath inurn'd!"

Poor Idreana! what a dismal fate!
In marble silence sat she,—tears alone
In bitter plenteousness ran down her cheeks,
And fell upon the white tomb of her heart.
Given o'er to grief—to anguish dedicate—
The lady of Sorrow's Convent she should seem!
Sighs vehement and deep at length brake forth,
And did relieve her even to speech:—she spake,—
" Lord Virgillisi, thou hast done a deed
" Hateful,—disloyal,—full of cruel fate;—

" That I have loved the gracious Gardastagno
" (As who that knew him, loved him not?—*you* loved him)
" My tongue confesses—it may be, my heart
" Hath recognized his virtues all too well—
" And watch'd them with too deep an interest!
" But, Virgillisi, I am not dishonoured,
" Thy bed cannot rebuke me,—for, though lost
" In womanly fair 'haviour, I have kept
" My honour (ah what honour!) spotless still!
" Nay—give me credence,—this is not a time
" To question my sad words!—Mark—Virgillisi!—
" Since I have proved the strange receptacle
" Of that most precious relic, the sweet heart
" Of Gardastagno, our remember'd friend,
" And the star of all fair courtesy and truth!
" I will be burthen'd with no meaner food,
" Nor house with one, who fills my thoughts with blood!"

So having spoken—her eyes, till then tear-calm'd,
Flash'd an unnatural light—and her breast heaved
Tumultuous. Starting up—she shuddering left
The side of Virgillisi—and went forth
To a great gazing window, which stood ope,
Gorgeously facing the broad western sky,
Above some giant trees, whose lofty tops
Billow'd beneath it—Desperate was the depth!
Yet Indreana, violent in heart,
And wild to fate,—leap'd forth,—down tearing through
The crashing branches and cold rushing air,
To the hideous earth,—where death awaited her!
Her shiver'd form lay at the castle's foot,
Despoiled of all comeliness and breath!

Like a body without its soul, stood Virgillisi
Confounded at his utter solitude,
And lost in a patient horror!—she was gone!

Gone terribly for ever from his sight!—
He had seen her dare the fall (and still her scarf,
Caught by the lattice, stream'd into the night).
His ears had heard the branches break—the air
Sound with her rushing garments—and his soul
Had sicken'd at the silence that ensued.
Death—death was in that silence—and he felt
Revenge had stalk'd too sternly through his heart!
The menials found the shatter'd Indreana
Beneath the castle walls,—and in wild grief
Rush'd to their master. Virgillisi stood
Alone,—beholding the wide staring window
That seem'd to him the portal of the grave!
They led him forth,—and tended him with care;
But he, in stupid sorrow, spake no word.

Days pass'd,—and tears to Virgillisi's eyes
Came ministers of comfort—comfort cold!
Yet sullen in the light,—he prowl'd in woods,

And shudder'd under trees;—and through the
night
Strange phantoms trampled o'er his heart, and died
Fiercely before his eyes.—His menials heard
Pitiful screams at midnight in his room,
But never might they break his solitude.
At last, grief-madden'd,—from Provence he fled,—
No one knew whither: He return'd no more!

The wife of Gardastagno mourn'd her lord
With a constancy which only woman knows;—
Superior to neglect, disgrace, and time!
He was her first—last—only passion:—he
Had been her daily, nightly dream;—and never
Could she forget—or alter in her love,
Though he had wrong'd her! She renounced the
world,
And in a convent buried her young days!

The fates of the Unfortunates were rumour'd

Throughout Provence; and the bodies being found,
Were in the castle chapel of Virgillisi
Entombed near each other, with sweet lines
Graven o'er the marble, telling their sad tale.

THE END.

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